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STUDIES  
IN  
THE HISTORY  
OF  
NATURAL THEOLOGY

BY  
CLEMENT C. J. WEBB

FELLOW OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD; AND WILDE LECTURER  
IN NATURAL AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION, 1911—1914

*Οὐκ ἀμάρτυρον ἑαυτὸν ἀφῆκεν*

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## PREFACE

THE following pages contain the substance of three courses of lectures delivered by the author as Wilde Lecturer on Natural and Comparative Religion in the University of Oxford during the academical years 1911-12 and 1912-13. They may be considered as contributions to the history of Natural Theology in Europe. The first is a general introduction to the subject, the second deals with the Natural Theology of Plato as expounded in the tenth book of the *Laws*, the third with mediaeval Natural Theology as represented by six writers, St. Anselm, Abelard, St. Thomas Aquinas, Raymond of Sebonde, Pietro Pomponazzi, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury. The inclusion of the thinker last named, who might at first seem to belong to the modern rather than to the mediaeval period, was suggested by the plan of Dr. Pfeiderer's *Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage*. Dr. Pfeiderer takes Spinoza as the first representative of the Philosophy of Religion, which he regards, on grounds which I have ventured to criticize, as a branch of speculation unknown alike to antiquity and to the Middle Ages. I cannot for my own part draw so sharp a line between the Philosophy of Religion and the Natural Theology which admittedly existed in those earlier periods.

No one can be more conscious than myself of the superficiality of the treatment which is here accorded to a subject requiring and deserving a far more thorough investigation. I can only plead in my own excuse that an Oxford college tutor can only undertake work such as belongs to the Lectureship which I was privileged to hold from 1911 to 1914, if he is prepared to accomplish less than might reasonably be demanded from a lecturer able to devote the whole or even the major part of his time to the duties of the lectureship.

The present work was written before Professor Burnet's *Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato* had appeared, and was already in print before I had an opportunity of reading that very important contribution to the study of the philosopher with whom my second course of lectures is concerned. It seemed out of the question at so late a stage to attempt the task of remodelling what I had said, in view of the new light there thrown upon the subject. But I am on the whole disposed to think that, had such a revision been practicable, no very substantial changes would have resulted. In speaking, as I have often had occasion to speak, of the legacy of veneration for the heavenly bodies bequeathed by Plato and Aristotle to the Natural Theology of the Middle Ages, I should no doubt have taken more pains to dissociate Plato from the Aristotelian contrast of the quintessential heavens and the sublunary world of grosser matter. But I had nowhere attributed to Plato this contrast as an express doctrine; and, on the other hand, the important fact, to which Professor Burnet has called attention, that Plato reckoned the earth as itself a planet—a fact from which it follows that his recognition of a divinity in the starry heavens did not imply a disparagement of the earth as being of a quite different and inferior nature—had so little influence upon the tradition with which I am here concerned that his authority went after all, though not by his own fault, to reinforce the authority of Aristotle in encouraging a notion equally injurious to the progress of religion and to that of natural science.

Oxford,

October, 1914.



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF NATURAL THEOLOGY

IN my inaugural lecture<sup>1</sup> I made some reference to a Letter in which Dr. Henry Wilde, when offering to the University the endowment of his Lectureship in Natural and Comparative Religion, described the objects which he had in view in making his generous proposal. I shall begin my present course by some quotations from this Letter, with a view to discovering in what sense of an expression by no means free from ambiguity the Founder of this Lecture desired to promote the study of Natural Religion. For we may, I think, take it as agreed that Natural Theology must stand in the closest possible relation to Natural Religion ; that it must denote the reasoned and articulated account of what is implied in the existence of natural religion. ' Natural Religion ', says the Letter, ' is man's conscious recognition of purposive intelligence and adaptability in the universe of things, similar to that exercised by himself.' ' The various acts ', it is added, ' which man performs to express this recognition and sense of dependence '—we seem to hear an echo, conscious or no, of Schleiermacher's definition of Religion—' constitute the different forms of religious worship.' Of this recognition or sense of dependence then, and of the practices expressive thereof, which constitute Natural Religion, Natural Theology will be the reasoned account.

I quote again from the Letter : ' Natural Science is the abstract knowledge of the nature and properties of things. . . . Natural Science, as embodied in ancient and modern cosmogonies, is the antecedent foundation of natural

<sup>1</sup> *Natural and Comparative Religion*, Oxford, 1911.



religion and of all other religions. Just as man's ideas of causation in the natural sciences are in conformity or otherwise to the real nature of things, so will his ideas of causation agree or disagree correlatively in natural religion and in all 'religions.'

These words make it perfectly clear that in the view of the Founder of this Lecture the word 'natural' used in speaking of Natural Religion, and therefore of Natural Theology, is to be understood in the same sense as that in which it is used when we speak of Natural Science. Natural Science is regarded as the basis of Natural Religion and therefore of Natural Theology.

It is difficult not to think that there is something here which needs clearing up. What do we mean by 'natural' when we speak of 'natural science', and how far is this really what was meant by 'natural' in the use of 'natural religion' or 'natural theology' when we meet with such expressions in Bacon or Paley—to take two well-known writers, to whom allusion is made by the Letter itself as representative of the study of natural religion in the past? What Bacon meant by Natural Theology we may see from the following passage: 'Natural Theology is rightly called also Divine Philosophy. It is defined as that spark of knowledge of God which may be had by the light of nature and the consideration of created things; and thus can fairly be held to be *divine* in respect of its object, and *natural* in respect of its source of information.'

When we speak of Natural Science we mean, I think, the knowledge of nature as distinguished from man. This is certainly the original significance of the expression: the old contrast, to which reference is made in a number of ancient titles preserved in our universities, was between

<sup>1</sup> *de Augm.* iii. 2: 'Theologia Naturalis Philosophia etiam Divina recte appellatur. Diffinitur autem haec ut sit talis scientiae scintilla, qualis de Deo haberi potest per lumen naturae et contemplationem rerum creatarum; et ratione objecti sane divina, ratione informationis naturalis censeri potest.'

Natural Philosophy, which we now call Natural Science, and Moral Philosophy, the Science which deals with the *mores*, the ways and customs of men. Such a contrast, no doubt, implies a conviction that man differs from all other beings in some way in which other kinds of being do not differ from one another ; or at least that the study of man differs from that of other kinds of being, not only as the study of any one kind of being differs from that of any other, but in some way which sets the study of man in a class by itself. It implies that the study of man is co-ordinate not with the study of some other species of animal, or even with the study of all other animals or all other organisms, but with the study of all other corporeal things whatever. I say 'corporeal' because I think that if any spiritual beings be supposed to exist beside man, we should not be ready to class the study of such beings under the head of Natural Science, unless, indeed, we were to hold that such a spiritual being were related to the whole world of corporeal things other than man in a manner analogous to that in which the spirit of man is related to his body.

Now it cannot be questioned that the very principle of this dichotomy between Natural and Moral Philosophy or Science seems to many in our days to be doubtful. Thus the view which such writers as Professor James Ward and Mr. Arthur Balfour have in mind when they speak of *Naturalism*, is just the doctrine that such a dichotomy has no real basis in fact ; that the study of man cannot be treated as a division of knowledge co-ordinate with the study of 'nature' except on grounds of a frankly arbitrary kind, such as that we are more interested in ourselves than in anything else, so that (to adapt the famous observation of Xenophanes of Colophon<sup>1</sup>) oxen or horses or lions might, with as good reason, distinguish a science of the ways of their own species from the study of nature in general.

<sup>1</sup> Frag. 15, Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, p. 54.

It is true that if we ask ourselves whether we think it possible that oxen or horses or lions actually do this, we can only answer that we feel sure they do not, and that they *could* only do so were they 'rational beings', that is, if they had the same ground for doing so as men actually have. But to the professors of 'naturalism' it is only by an illusion that even we men suppose ourselves to possess something which marks us off decisively from the rest of the beings among whom we find ourselves—namely, that 'freedom', as Kant calls it, in virtue of which we belong to a different realm from that of nature, though in certain respects we belong to that realm also.

We are all accustomed to speak of 'Science' *tout court* when we mean 'Natural Science'; and there is something else than a desire for brevity implied in the usage. It is expressive of a widespread tendency to regard that only as science or knowledge in the proper sense of the word which has been brought or which we assume could be brought, were our information about it more complete than it is, within the sweep of explanation by laws of mechanical necessity. It is impossible to deny that what from Plato downwards has been treated as the method of explanation by the notion of the Good, or teleology, is as a matter of fact employed at least in the biological sciences; but here the thoroughgoing naturalist is resolved to admit no new principle except provisionally, as a principle of discovery, not ultimately as a principle of explanation. He adheres to the exclusion suggested by Bacon of reference to a final cause as explanatory, *except in the case of human actions*;<sup>1</sup> and even there again, if he is quite consistent, it is not for him truly explanatory. For him human freedom is illusory, and in the long run men are mere conscious automata, whose consciousness is but an 'epiphenomenon', which makes them aware

<sup>1</sup> *Nov. Org.*, ii. 2.



of what happens in their lives, but does not at all determine it. Whether any one can really believe this is another matter ; and no doubt some who profess determinism and naturalism do not fully realize that this is involved in it. Yet it is, I think, impossible to deny that it is so involved, if the position is thought out to the end. In the last resort, then, there is on this view no distinct sphere for *moral*, or, as it is sometimes called, *mental and moral* science by the side of *natural* science ; all 'science' is *natural* science, and the fashionable usage is justified which implies that it is so.

'Natural Science', says Dr. Wilde's Letter, 'is embodied in ancient and modern cosmogonies.' But clearly there is here some indistinctness of expression. 'Cosmogonies ancient and modern' are often mutually inconsistent : hence they sometimes do not embody 'science' or 'knowledge' of nature, but only mistaken beliefs about it. Those who put them forward regarded them, indeed, as embodying natural science or knowledge of the nature and property of things ; but as a matter of fact they did not embody knowledge, only opinion, and frequently mistaken opinion. It is no mere word-splitting pedantry to insist upon this. For though the Letter often speaks of the natural sciences in our days as infested, no less than the historical religions, by prejudices, animistic or atheistic, yet when it is emphasized that the true basis of Natural Religion is Natural Science, and Natural Religion, whose advance is denied, is distinguished from the historical religions, and when we are bidden to look forward to 'that state of society in which in the fundamentals of religion, as well as of science, all mankind will ultimately be of one heart and of one mind', it is clear that the Natural Science which is to be the ground of that Natural Religion for whose advent we are to make ready, must be the one true and genuine knowledge of the universe, and no multitude

of erroneous opinions 'embodied in cosmogonies ancient and modern'.

The view adumbrated in the Letter then might be described as Naturalism, inasmuch as no fundamental dichotomy between Nature and Humanity is suggested, and the genuine knowledge of Nature is represented as the sole ground of true Religion. The differences which divide the historical religions, at any rate, seem to be assimilated to the differences between cosmogonies, and to be due, like these, to error in them all. They are all based on beliefs or opinions about Nature; the true Religion will be based upon a genuine knowledge thereof.

Yet such a Naturalism as the Letter suggests will not be Naturalism as Dr. Ward, for example, in his well-known Gifford Lectures on *Naturalism and Agnosticism* understands the word. The conception of purpose is not retained, as in Bacon's remarks on the use of the notion of a Final Cause, to serve as the explanation of human actions, but of nothing else. Yet it is not therefore altogether dismissed; on the contrary it is extended to the whole realm of nature. No doubt with Bacon also it was so extended for what we may call devotional use, where we are not attempting to discover the causes of phenomena but reflecting upon the providence of God with a religious and not a scientific purpose. But by Dr. Wilde it is extended as explanatory to the whole realm of nature. Facts in astronomy, in chemistry, in biology, are alleged by Dr. Wilde, which in his judgement will admit of no other explanation.

" " When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, " it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less." " <sup>1</sup> Humpty Dumpty had certainly a more fortunate experience than most of us. The history

<sup>1</sup> *Through the Looking Glass*, p. 124.

of philosophical terminology is full of the monuments of the intractability of words. And no word has been more intractable than the word Nature with its derivatives. I should be wandering too far from my subject if I were to attempt to illustrate this as it might be illustrated. I shall only for the present state very briefly what seem to be the chief senses in which Nature has been used in philosophical discussions. It has been used for *what actually is*, for *what things start with being*, and for *what things have it in them to become*; and 'natural' accordingly may mean 'real' or 'actual'; it may mean 'original'; it may mean 'ideal'. Nor is this the limit of its possible ambiguity. Those who hold that whatever is is right, or that 'the real is the rational and the rational the real', may use the word 'Nature' at once in the first and the third senses (those of 'actual' and of 'ideal'). Those who hold that a thing has in the course of its development been made worse than it was, has been spoiled, may use 'natural' of it in the second and third senses ('original' and 'ideal') at once. Those who hold that it has in the course of its development been improved may so use it in the second sense (of 'original') as to contrast it with the 'ideal'. Again, the work of Nature may, as we have seen, be contrasted with that of Man; but this either to its comparative advantage or to its comparative disadvantage. Or Man may be included under Nature; but here again this may mean the denial to man of the possession of those supposed prerogatives, in virtue of which the contrast between them was made; or the assertion that those characteristics really belong indeed to man, but belong no less to the rest of the universe. Accordingly man may be said to be by nature a social animal, and society prior by nature to the individual; or, on the other hand, by the 'state of nature' may be meant a pre-social state, in which man's life is that of a mere animal regarded from the point of view of

a civilized human being, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'.<sup>1</sup> To deny the *supernatural* may lead one to acquiesce pessimistically in an unsatisfactory world, or to rejoice in the best of all possible worlds or in a *Natura* which may equally well be called *Deus*. That which as *convention* may be contrasted with *nature* as something comparatively superficial and transitory may be as *freedom* exalted above *nature* because it involves thought and will, which even though they should not endure, would yet surpass in excellence whatever should persist without them. In Pascal's famous words:<sup>2</sup> 'L'homme n'est qu'un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser. Une vapeur, une goutte d'eau suffit pour le tuer. Mais quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt ; et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien.' Lastly, the precept to 'live according to Nature' may be, as by the Stoics, taken as the fundamental moral law ; or, as by Kant, it may be regarded as the very essence of Morality that it involves something, to wit Freedom, of which Nature, as such, knows nothing. The one way of speaking would seek the essential nature of anything in what it *ought* to do or to be, rather than in what it actually does or is, so far as the latter does not correspond to the former. The other sets in sharp contrast what *ought* to be with what *is*, and a being whose action can be determined by the idea of what ought to be with the whole world of beings which possess no such idea ; which do what they do and are what they are, either with no consciousness at all or only with a consciousness for which there is no choice between a right and a wrong. To this latter world it confines the application of the name 'Nature'.

The ambiguities which thus beset the word Nature and

<sup>1</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, c. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Pensées*, ed. Faugère, ii, p. 84.

its derivatives have introduced no little confusion into the use of the expression Natural Religion. It has never, I suppose, meant just the religion that actually exists ; but its meaning has varied with all the other meanings of ' nature '. It has sometimes meant a supposed original groundwork or foundation of religion upon which something else has afterwards been superimposed. This superstructure again has been regarded sometimes as something of less permanent worth or even as superfluous, sometimes as that part of religion which is of most dignity and importance, in relation to which ' natural religion ' is no more than a foundation or substructure. The mythologizing tendency to throw back into a fancied past what is in fact the ideal suggested though not realized by that which is actually present, has counted for something in the history of the phrase ; while we shall find that the influence of the familiar contrast between Nature and Man has also affected it. For Natural Religion has tended sometimes to be identified with a religious sentiment towards, ' Natural Theology ' with a religious interpretation of, the phenomena of the external world apart from the action of the human mind, in contradistinction from a religious sentiment directed upon what are taken for human institutions, a theology based upon the traditions of some human society.

In considering therefore what any particular writer means by Natural Theology we shall have to observe carefully, so far as is possible, what he would *contrast* with it. And here we are at once confronted by a fact of much interest in the history of religion, which may perhaps be fairly described thus : that Natural Theology was originally contrasted with Civil or Political rather than as later with Revealed Theology. These two phrases, even if they may turn out to refer at least in part to the same thing, undoubtedly suggest very different estimates of it.



In his great work *de Civitate Dei* St. Augustine has preserved to us some interesting fragments from the *Antiquitates* of the famous scholar Varro, whom his contemporary Cicero called in his *Academics* (in some chapter which St. Augustine had but we have not) *homo omnium facile acutissimus et sine ulla dubitatione doctissimus*.<sup>1</sup> In this work Varro treated of *res humanae* in the first place, and of *res divinae* in the second; and justified himself for adopting this order by the remark that 'as the painter must exist before the picture and the builder before the house, so must civil societies exist before the institutions which they establish'.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the *res divinae* of which he is to treat are the creation of *civitates*, human societies; they exist in the old Greek phrase νόμος and not φύσει. Had he been writing (so Augustine tells us that he went on to say) *de omni natura deorum*, he would have treated of the gods first and of men afterwards. Had he been founding a new state, he would have described the gods and their names *ex naturae formula*; but since it was of the already existing Roman commonwealth that he was writing, he must treat only of the gods of that commonwealth; and these are, it is implied, the creatures of the commonwealth, not the commonwealth of them. There are three *genera theologiae* according to Varro<sup>3</sup> (and also, as Augustine tells us,<sup>4</sup> according to Varro's contemporary, the Pontifex Maximus Scaevola), *unum mythicon, alterum physicon, tertium civile*.<sup>5</sup> The first of these is

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 4: 'Sicut prior est pictor quam tabula picta, prior faber quam aedificium, ita priores sunt civitates quam ea quae a civitatibus instituta sunt.'

<sup>3</sup> *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Scaevola and Varro were here following a Greek original, as the Greek words used by Varro (*physicon* and *mythicon*) show; and this original Zeller (*Eclectics*, Eng. tr., p. 49) supposes to have been Panaetius, whose scholar Scaevola is said by Cicero (*de Oratore*, i. 11, § 45) to have been. The division is also found in the *Placita Philosophorum* (i. 6. 880; Diels, *Dox. Gr.*,

that which the poets mostly use, it is appropriate to the theatre. Varro, when he spoke of this, was of course thinking, no less than was his Greek authority, of the Greek mythology; for the Latin poets, having no genuine mythology of their own, or one so slight and jejune that it could not serve their purpose, had taken over the Greek, and set it to the account of the Roman gods who were regarded as equivalent to those Greek gods about whom the legends were originally related. But we are more concerned with the contrast and relation between the second kind of theology, the *physicon* or, as Augustine renders it, *naturale genus*, and the third, the *civile* or political. The Natural Theology of Varro is described as that which the philosophers use and which is *accommodata ad mundum* as that of the poets *ad theatrum*; while the political is used by the peoples of the world and is *accommodata ad urbem*. This will differ with different peoples, and the Roman Civil Theology which is Varro's theme will be but one of many which exist in the world.

It is clear that to Varro himself the Natural Theology alone had any genuine truth in it; and when he says that had he been treating *de omni natura deorum* he would not have postponed the gods to men, he means that, though the heroes of the Greek mythology were creatures of man's invention, and so too were the *numina* of the Roman ritual,

p. 295), which passed under the name of Plutarch, and was doubtless in the *Vetusta Placita*, now supposed by Diels (see Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed., p. 423) to have taken shape in the school of Posidonius. Posidonius was himself a disciple of Panaetius. This we are told by Epiphanius, of whose authority for the statement Diels professes himself ignorant. We otherwise know of Panaetius's religious views only that, unlike the Stoics in general, he did not believe in divination, and also that he mocked at theology, ὁ περὶ θεοῦ λόγος, as idle babbling, and himself believed in the eternity of the κόσμος. But even if we trust Epiphanius's authority, this is quite compatible with Panaetius being the originator of the triple division of theology: ὁ περὶ θεοῦ λόγος and τὰ περὶ θεῶν λεγόμενα—both phrases appear in the passage of Epiphanius—probably only refer to the mythical and civil theologies.

the power or powers manifested in the phenomena of nature were older than men and alone deserved the name of god ; and, had Varro been the Romulus or Numa of a new Rome, would alone have been honoured with it by him. They alone seemed to Varro (as we learn from Augustine) to have held the true creed about God who held him to be the Soul of the World, *Anima motu ac ratione mundum gubernans*. But such theories as those of Heraclitus, of the Pythagoreans, and of Epicurus belonged to Natural Theology ; they were seriously intended speculations concerning the power manifested in natural phenomena, and this was for Varro the true character of any theology which was not a mere figment of poets or of lawgivers. Significance indeed could be given to the *civilis theologia* beyond that of a mere enumeration of arbitrary customs by reading into it the truths of ‘ natural theology ’. Plutarch’s treatise *de Iside et Osiride* affords a classical example of this process, applied to Egyptian ritual and mythology.

For the disconnexion of the *fabulosa* from the *civilis theologia* we find in Varro (who, unlike his Greek authority, places his ‘ natural theology ’ in the midst of the three) does not belong to an early stage of theological development. Commonly a mythology consists for the most part of stories explanatory of ritual, though, no doubt, with the advance of civilization a separation tends always to take place through the progress of imagination creating new stories in answer to new questions ; and later on through the selective and consolidating influence of poetic genius and tradition. So a Greek writer could, like Varro’s authority, distinguish the ‘ mythological ’ from the ‘ civil ’ theology ; but to the Romans the divergence was much more marked because the Greek mythology was to them not only a literary product but a literary importation, not originally intended to explain *their* ritual but that of another people. For no doubt, as we see from the treatise of Plutarch above mentioned, these

‘interpretationes physiologicae’ (or, as Augustine translates the word, ‘naturalium rationum’<sup>1</sup>) were sometimes correct, in the sense that the rites and the legends associated with them had to do with the drama of the seasons. But at the time that they arose the rites were probably credited with some kind of magical effectiveness; they were supposed to control or aid the operations of nature. The legends were stories told to explain the phenomena as due to the actions of manlike beings. However erroneous the beliefs which underlay this magic and this anthropomorphism, it was intelligible that, where those beliefs were held, the rites should be practised and the stories told. But when the ‘natural explanations’ were given by philosophers of the age of Varro or of Plutarch it was supposed that the originators of the old religions, having before them the operations of nature, taken as the philosophers themselves took them, and theorizing about them as the philosophers theorized, deliberately taught the results of their observations and speculations to the ignorant multitude in the form of stories about the gods. But it is difficult to see why it should have been necessary to set forth things of this sort at all to the multitude if they could not be set forth as they truly were. That ‘truth embodied in a tale’ should ‘enter into lowly doors’<sup>2</sup> may be desirable where the truth concerns a divine being into personal relation with whom the simple folk, to whom the tale is told, can enter to their great advantage, and where these simple folk could not know that there was any possibility of so entering, unless the character of this being should be illustrated to them by a story suggestive of justice, pity, love, or the like as they appear in the ordinary relations of life. But it is not easy to see why it should be at all desirable in the case of such matters as the course of the sun, the annual rise of the Nile, and so forth. We are disposed to agree with Augustine when, after insisting on the gross obscenity

<sup>1</sup> *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xxxvi.

of certain sacred ceremonies, he says: <sup>1</sup> 'But you say these rites are patient of an interpretation as signifying natural phenomena? As though we were here in search of a knowledge of nature, and not rather of a knowledge of God! Certainly the true God is God by nature, not merely' (like the gods of the fabulous political theologies) 'in the opinion of men; but not all that is a part of nature is God; man and beast, plant and tree are all parts of nature, but none of them is God.' We feel, I say, disposed to agree with these remarks of Augustine because we, like him, do not readily take the phenomena of nature for gods. We are more likely to sympathize with the view proposed by Varro himself—that the world as a whole is animated by a soul as the human body by a human soul, and that this soul of the world may, if anything may, be designated by the name of God. Augustine indeed, though not contented with this doctrine of mere immanence (to use a phrase much in vogue to-day), is prepared to recognize its superiority to any that the popular religion or the mythology of the poets had to offer. But we shall not understand the conception which Varro and other cultivated and philosophical men of the times near the beginning of the Christian era had of Natural Theology unless we bear in mind that not only a pantheistic doctrine, such as we have seen that Varro held, which taught that, in Pope's words, 'all are but parts of one stupendous whole, Whose body nature is and God the soul', <sup>2</sup> but also a belief in the special divinity of certain natural objects, namely, the heavenly bodies, was no absurdity to them; it had indeed actually been entertained

<sup>1</sup> vi. 8: 'At enim habent ista physiologicas quasdam . . . interpretationes. Quasi vero nos in hac disputatione physiologiam quaeramus et non theologiam, id est rationem non naturae sed Dei. Quamvis enim qui verus Deus est non opinione sed natura Deus sit, non tamen omnis natura Deus est; quia et hominis et pecoris et arboris et lapidis utique natura est, quorum nihil est Deus.'

<sup>2</sup> *Essay on Man*.



by the greatest of their masters in philosophy, by Plato and Aristotle themselves. Moreover, it was just in this belief that the sun, moon, and stars were divine that the religion of the philosophers came on to common ground with the traditional religion of the peoples around them.

Thus the results of our investigation so far into the origins of Natural Theology are as follows. Natural Theology was contrasted by the scholars of the later classical Paganism with Civil Theology, by which latter was understood the doctrines implied in the religions actually practised by civil communities. This latter was conceived of as an invention of men, while the former was regarded as a part of philosophy or science concerned with the knowledge of the highest beings that the world contains. This is the use of the words that we find in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,<sup>1</sup> where we read, 'There must be three theoretical philosophies—mathematics, physics, and what we may call theology—since it is obvious that if the divine is present anywhere, it is present in beings of this sort'; beings, that is, which are capable, unlike the abstractions studied by mathematical science, of existing separately by themselves, and which, unlike the objects of physics, are not subject to movement or change. Such beings, possessed of a real individual existence yet eternal and immutable, were for Aristotle the divine first movers whether of the universe as a whole or of the separate spheres; the 'causes', as the passage preceding that just quoted has described them, 'of so much of the Divine as appears to us',<sup>2</sup> namely, of the movements of the heavenly bodies. This belief in the divinity of the stars will engage our attention again later.

The Civil Theology might be interpreted as an allegory or dramatic representation in symbolic acts of the operations of the principal natural powers, and in this way connected with

<sup>1</sup> E. 1026, a. 18 seqq.

<sup>2</sup> *τίτια τοῦ φανεροῦ τῶν θείων.*

the Natural Theology, in relation to which, however, it would still stand in a quite subordinate position. This interpretation had a real basis in fact. For much of the traditional religion had originally had to do with the explanation of natural phenomena as caused by the activity of man-like beings and with the attempt to control them through the propitiation of such beings, or through magical manipulation, by imitating them or otherwise, of the natural phenomena themselves. But, from the point of view of a later science, these interpretations could only result in suggesting that the rites and stories of the traditional religion were an idle exercise of fanciful ingenuity and destitute of religious value. This they could only possess so far as the powers of nature, or some of them, could still be considered as divine, and as claiming worship from men which it was intrinsically better should be paid somehow than not at all ; so that ceremonies which contained much that was in itself of little value, but which use and wont had made venerable and sacred, were not to be cast aside, even though, had one been (as Varro said) starting a State afresh, the worship one would have prescribed might have been more closely adapted to the actual state of knowledge and speculation concerning the structure of the universe. What effect on the conception entertained of Natural Theology was the later opposition of it not to Civil, but to Revealed Theology to bring with it ?

It is perhaps worth mentioning at this point that the actual expression 'Natural Theology' was not employed, to the best of my knowledge, in describing this antithesis until quite a late date. The passage already quoted from Augustine's book *de Civitate Dei*, about Varro's threefold division of theology into mythical, natural, and civil, led in the Latin Middle Ages to the association of the word 'theology' with heathenism, down to the time of Abelard. When that epoch-making innovator of the twelfth century (to whom the scholastic

method of philosophizing and the University system which, in a close mutual connexion, were to be the principal features of the later mediaeval culture, alike owed their origin) used the word as the title of his work on Christian doctrine, we find conservatives like St. Bernard evidently struck by the novelty, and—if we may judge by the sarcastic iteration of *noster theologus* in Bernard's letter to Innocent II on the errors of Abelard—by what seemed to them the presumption of its use in this way. It was, they felt, all of a piece with the philosopher's audacious and irreverent indifference to traditional practices and beliefs. The next generation of scholars, however, had sat at Abelard's feet, and the use of *theologia* for the study of Christian doctrine was soon completely established. The suggestion of the word probably came to Abelard from a Greek source, from a passage in the writer who passed under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite;<sup>1</sup> one of his works indeed was designated *Mystical Theology*, and became the great authority on that branch of speculation in the later mediaeval Church. In Eastern Christendom *θεολογία* had on the whole acquired a somewhat narrower sense; it was usually appropriated to the doctrine of Christ's divine nature (in which the Church *θεολογεῖ τὸν χριστόν*, reckons him as God), and so to the doctrine of the Trinity as opposed to the doctrine of the Incarnation, designated in contrast with this as *οἰκονομία*.

*Theologia* thus once established as a name for the doctrine whose sources were sought in the Scriptures as explained by its patristic interpreters, among men to whom Augustine's account of Varro's classification of the *genera theologiae* was familiar and who aimed, as the great Schoolmen did, at a general view of the world based upon a synthesis of the teaching of the Bible and of the 'Philosopher' *par excellence*, Aristotle, we should expect to find, and do actually find, *theologia* coming to be regarded as a name for the general doctrine

<sup>1</sup> *de Caelesti Hierarchia*, 4, § 3.

of divine things, of which part was to be found in Aristotle, especially in his *Metaphysics* (where the word was, as we have seen, actually employed), and part in the Christian Scriptures; the former part accessible by the light of Nature, the latter only by that of Grace; the former Natural, the latter Revealed. The actual expression *Theologia Naturalis* is perhaps not met with, certainly not as the title of a book, before the work of the late Spanish Schoolman, Raymond of Sebonde, alternatively called *Liber Creaturarum*, which was translated by Montaigne in his youth, and an *Apology* for which is the longest of his famous essays; an essay which has, it is true, less to do with Raymond than its name suggests. Of this work, however, I shall speak no further at present, but shall return from this digression on the use of the name 'Natural Theology' to the question of the relation of the older antithesis of Natural and Civil Theology, and the later antithesis, with which we are more familiar, of Natural and Revealed. Two things at once strike us. The first is this: in the antithesis of Natural and Civil Theology, as drawn in antiquity, there was no question but that the former was of greater value than the latter; while in the later antithesis the reverse was the case with most of those who made the distinction. There have, it is true, been some who (like Lord Herbert of Cherbury, generally reckoned as the father of English deism), while not denying the existence of 'revelation', regarded the doctrine of Natural Religion as of higher import, since it inculcates eternal truths universally necessary to salvation, while what is 'revealed' is of temporary, local, or particular reference only; and there have been others who have seen in revelation only, to use the phrase which gave a title to Matthew Tindal's celebrated book, a 'republication of the religion of nature'. Such opinions, however, would scarcely have arisen except as criticisms or revisions of a view for which the highest and most precious part of theology was that which was *revealed*, while what is *natural* is but the preparation or substructure. But

besides this difference in the two antitheses, another thing cannot fail to arrest our attention ; namely, that between the ‘civil theology’ of Varro and the ‘revealed theology’ of later times there is a close resemblance. No doubt the actual stories told about the Roman gods, the actual rites with which they were propitiated, differed widely from the history and the institutions which were considered sacred by Christian theologians as matter of divine revelation ; but still it is true that ‘revealed theology’ was conceived to include and even to start from a record of historical events and of positive ordinances, and that it was just such positive ordinances and narratives concerning the beings who were worshipped thereby that constituted the civil theology of the ancients. As we have already seen, the discrepancy of the ‘mythical’ theology from the ‘civil’, implied in the division adopted by Varro, arose among the Greeks in consequence of the growth of a great national literature over against the local cults, and was emphasized among the Romans by the circumstance that so few stories of native origin were told about the Roman gods, that a foreign mythology—the Greek—was imported *en bloc* to fill the vacant place. Normally the stories of the ‘mythical’ and the rites of the ‘civil’ theology would have gone more closely together ; and the two combined would have corresponded to the Revealed Theology of later times.

Putting together, then, these two features of the contrast between the two antitheses, we see that the characteristic difference between the older view (which has been revived in more modern times) and the newer was a difference in the way of regarding *history* in relation to religion.

I think it may fairly be said that in the established religions of ancient societies the mythological element is in the first place secondary to the ritual ; and in the second place is really *mythology*—a telling of tales, and not *history*—a record of fact. In religions which are properly speaking



historical, the sanction of any ritual regarded as essential is sought in the historical record of its institution, and it is because divinely commanded that it is to be performed. We may indeed sometimes suspect on critical grounds that the form in which the record has been transmitted has not, as a matter of fact, been unaffected by the tendency to justify traditional usages; yet this justification by the record is just on that account demanded, because the sanction of the ritual is sought in the record in a way in which it is not so sought in religions which are not historical religions, not 'religions of a book'. And when I say that mythology was, in the established religions of ancient societies, on the whole tale-telling and not history—I add the qualifying words 'on the whole' because in their later periods, after the rise of a genuine conception of history, it was natural to seek for primitive history in the current mythology—I am, of course, concerned with the attitude taken up towards the sacred narratives rather than with the actual content of the narratives themselves. For it can by no means be contended that the tales related in ancient mythology are always untrue, and the narratives in the scriptures of the historical religions always true. Unquestionably, on the one hand, some myths have preserved the memory of real events; and, on the other hand, much has passed for history and for sacred history which never really occurred; which indeed was not infrequently simply old myth writ large as history, but none the more true for that. It is well known that some modern scholars would dissolve the greater part of the sacred history of the chief religions of the modern world into such mythology in masquerade. If I were to express my own opinion I would not hesitate to say that in this they go a great deal too far. On this subject, however, I will for the present content myself with quoting an observation of an author who will not be suspected of partiality in the matter and who, I am myself persuaded, has himself in certain cases greatly underrated

the amount of historical credibility possessed by what has passed among Christians for sacred history. 'The historical reality both of Buddha and of Christ has sometimes', says Sir James Frazer, 'been doubted or denied. It would be just as reasonable to question the historical existence of Alexander the Great and Charlemagne on account of the legends which have gathered round them. The great religious movements which have stirred humanity to its depths and altered the beliefs of nations spring ultimately from the conscious and deliberate efforts of extraordinary minds, not from the blind unconscious co-operation of the multitude. The attempt', he continues, 'to explain history without the influence of great men may flatter the vanity of the vulgar, but it will find no favour with the philosophic historian.'<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, though I do not think that the sacred history of Christianity, of Buddhism, or of Judaism, is no more than mythology in masquerade, I do not deny that both mythology and the ideas bound up with ritual actions of immemorial antiquity have greatly affected what has been taken for sacred history in these religions. For example, not to trespass upon disputed ground, it will scarcely be questioned but that the thought of the same being who eventually appeared as the Buddha having been in previous incarnations, before his birth in the form of Gautama, the hero of all the old folk-tales comprised in the Játaka, and again the thought of Jesus as the true Paschal Lamb, have profoundly influenced the view taken of the founders of Buddhism and Christianity respectively in the religions of their founding.

It thus becomes possible to suggest that the old antithesis of Natural and Civil Theology and the later antithesis of Natural and Revealed Theology are really exactly analogous, and that much at least of what passes for Revealed Theology can only be distinguished from what the ancients

<sup>1</sup> *Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., Adonis, &c., i, p. 311 n. i. Cp. *The Scapegoat*, p. 412 n. See also the last essay in M. Loisy's *A propos d'histoire des religions* and Mr. F. C. Conybeare's *The Historical Christ*.

meant by Civil Theology through an erroneous belief in the historicity of what is only mythology; while on the whole, as Lord Herbert of Cherbury thought, both Civil and Revealed Theology represent, in contrast with Natural, the element in theology which is *not* of eternal and universal significance. It will at any rate be admitted that Civil and Revealed Theology professedly involve an *historical* element, which is professedly absent from Natural Theology.

We have now to consider, so far as it is necessary for ascertaining the true nature of Natural Theology, as Natural Theology has been expounded by the many great writers who have devoted themselves to its study, what is the place of the historical element in Religion. This will involve an inquiry whether the high importance attached to sacred history in certain religions, and above all in the Christian, as contrasted with the lesser importance assigned to it in the state religions of antiquity, is a mark of progress in religious development or the reverse. It will also involve an inquiry into the dependence or otherwise of philosophical (or 'Natural') theology upon popular theology, in order to ascertain whether the latter is to be regarded merely as traditional, or, with an explicit reference to real or supposed events in history, properly so called, as *revealed*.

But first of all we must consider what exactly we mean by the 'historical element' in religion. The expression may be used in two not wholly equivalent ways. It may mean in the first place that element in religious belief or practice which appeals for its sanction not to abstract reason but to custom and law. 'This our people have always done—this is the procedure prescribed by the law of the community—this is the teaching which has been handed down to us from our fathers or from the gods or from their messengers.' It is only from the point of view of later reflection that this element in religion is described as historical; but from that point of view it is a natural expression. If we are asked why such and such

things are done or said or believed, the answer in cases of this sort will be that no reason can be given which does not refer to the special history and traditions of the community in which the practice, the legend, or the creed obtains ; just as the justification or even the explanation of certain political usages and convictions (and in the earlier stages of development religious usages and convictions are not easily distinguishable from political) cannot be given without taking into account the special circumstances past and present of the community concerned.

But by the ' historical element ' in religion may be meant something more restricted than this. The phrase may be made to refer to that part of some religions which consists in a belief that certain past events have actually occurred ; so that it is thought *irreligious* to reject, *religious* to hold this belief. Now it is I think clear that it is only certain religions, and those among the most highly developed, that contain an ' historical element ' in this sense, and it is not, I think, doubtful that of these, which may perhaps be enumerated as Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, it is Christianity which has laid by far the greatest stress upon this element. With respect to the first—to Buddhism—although the history of the Founder has counted for much in the life of the religion, I do not suppose it can be said that there is, or ever has been, attached to belief in it the dogmatic importance which has in Christendom been attached to belief in the historical events of the life of Christ ; while with respect to the other three, which stand in a closer historical connexion with one another, and whose sacred histories have a part in common, the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in an historical person, which distinguishes Christianity from Judaism and Mohammedanism, inevitably carries with it the attribution, in Christianity, of a still higher position to the sacred history than belonged to it in either of the other two. In the wider sense of ' historical element ' which



I described above, we saw that the assertion of the presence of such an element is made rather from the point of view of the student of religions than from that of the adherent of the religions themselves ; but in this narrower sense, though no doubt it belongs to the reflective study of a religion to distinguish accurately what is rightly called historical and what is not, yet there is supposed, in the adherent of the religion as such, an apprehension of the meaning of history in distinction from mere tale-telling or mythology. It does not of course follow that mere tales may not sometimes or often be mistaken for genuine history, or that the sense of historical fact may not be present in very varying degrees in the consciousness of the adherents of religions which claim to rest upon historical fact.

I suppose it to be true on the whole that the earliest appearance<sup>1</sup> of a narrative element in religious tradition is that of tales intended to explain ritual customs. The story, the myth is here quite secondary to the observance which it explains. What is of primary importance is that the rite should be carried out ; the tale is intended to satisfy the natural curiosity of those newly initiated, and in so doing to confirm them in their attachment to the practice. It is just in this way that the story of the slaying of the first-born, and of the destroying angel's exemption of the Israelite households from the general doom, is to be related, according to the law of Exodus xii, to the children of Israel who ask their fathers, ' What mean ye by this service ? ' But in the religion of Israel we have already a beginning of that stress upon the religious value of history which Christianity inherited from its parent faith and carried much further ; and this is closely associated with the character of Judaism as the religion ' of a Book '—to adapt the phrase which in the early chapters of the Koran is used of the Jews and Christians who believed in those Scriptures which the record

<sup>1</sup> Except perhaps those in which the narrative itself is supposed to act as a spell : see Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup>, *Spirits of the Corn and Wild*, i. 106.



of Mohammed's own revelations was supposed to confirm. They are there called 'people of the Book' in contrast to the heathen who did not enjoy a scriptural revelation nor believed in 'God and the last day'.

I would recall to your memory here the observations which Plato in the *Phaedrus*<sup>1</sup> puts into the mouth of Socrates regarding the legendary rape of Orithyia by Boreas. Socrates and Phaedrus, it will be remembered, are in the neighbourhood of the place whence Boreas was said to have carried off Orithyia, the daughter of Erechtheus; and Phaedrus asks Socrates what he thinks of the truth of this story.<sup>2</sup> Socrates says that he would be in very respectable company if he were to disbelieve it as it is told, and were to rationalize it, explaining it as meaning simply that the maiden died in consequence of being dashed by the north wind against the rocks. He has, however, no time to spend in this sort of ingenious speculation, and has enough to do in obeying the Delphic Oracle's precept, to know himself. In other words, he will occupy himself with moral improvement and will not waste his energy on the discussion of sacred legends, but will let them stand as they are. In these observations we see expressed an attitude which has often been taken up by philosophers since Plato's time towards the sacred history of later religions; but rationalistic explanations, although doubtless unacceptable to conservative persons, even in the case of the Grecian mythology, yet had not there to meet with an opposition so deeply rooted in the piety of the ordinary religious man as has the criticism of the authenticity of the Biblical records by modern men of science and modern scholars. For so long as the ancient ceremonies were observed, so long as the cock was sacrificed to Aesculapius, it mattered but little whether one were orthodox with respect to the truth of the stories which were told respecting Aesculapius. Different and inconsistent stories might be told at different places. Scepticism about any story which

<sup>1</sup> 229 c ff.

<sup>2</sup> τοῦτο τὸ μυθολόγημα.

might be injurious to the sanctity of the place with which it was connected would be resented by local patriotism and local self-interest; just as I have heard the scepticism of Professor Haverfield about certain sites on the Roman wall resented by the old man who used to show Chesters near Chollerford; or as the monks of St. Denis resented Abelard's historical speculations on the identity of their patron, and accused him to Louis VII of robbing the king of the chief glory of his realm.<sup>1</sup> For places of pilgrimage thrive on pilgrimages, and passions lower and higher, love of money, love of home, combine to set the inhabitants of places of pilgrimage against scepticism respecting the genuineness of what they have to show to pilgrims. But the stress laid on belief in historical events in Christian theology was not possible until a notion of history had arisen, which implied a general view of and an interest in the life of humanity as a whole. No doubt this arose in Greece in the classical period; and just for that reason there is a beginning there of something like the later view of a unified sacred history in the very efforts of Greek writers to identify the gods of other peoples with their own, and to form schemes of comparative mythology. That there was no more than a beginning was due to the manifestly legendary character of the greater part of ancient mythology, and the absence of any appearance of documentary evidence for most of the statements which composed it; and also to the fact, to which we shall have to refer more at length hereafter, that the thinkers of Greece found in the popular religion comparatively little upon which their minds and hearts could feed, and so tended far more than the thinkers of Christendom to develop their own theology in independence of the popular religion.

The sacred stories contained in the Scriptures of Christendom gave themselves out for history as those of the Greeks did not; and some of them could—to say the least—produce

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Calamitatum*, c. 10.

very respectable credentials. Moreover, their moral quality corresponded more closely to what Plato required for a mythology which would serve the ends of his ideal State than any which he had himself at hand. Lastly, a new unity had been imparted to history by the establishment of a Catholic Church coextensive with the Roman Empire ; and the continuity of Jewish history from the origin of Christianity within the Jewish nation back to the remotest ages, the story of which was contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, had given to the sacred records of Christianity a more historical air (in our sense of the word)—though as we now know they had not always the right to wear it—than the more unsystematic traditions of the classical nations.

The Jews would not, like Solon in the *Timæus* of Plato,<sup>1</sup> have meekly accepted the criticism of the Egyptian priest, ‘ You Hellenes are always children : there is no old man among you.’ Like the Egyptians themselves they claimed to carry back their national history to a vastly distant period. They did not in their genealogies reach a divine progenitor after a dozen generations or so, as Hecataeus<sup>2</sup> reckoned himself in the sixteenth from a god (whereas, said the Egyptian priest, ‘ 11,340 years had passed since the gods dwelt like men on earth ’), or as, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the founders of the English kingdoms in Britain, Ida, Cerdic, and so forth, were but nine generations removed from Woden ;<sup>3</sup> nay, they were prepared to date the beginning of Egyptian history itself in the chronological table of their own.

In the later history of Christendom there sprang up everywhere—often there did not spring up, there only went on—stories of saints exactly analogous to, often merely transformations of, stories of pre-Christian gods and heroes.

<sup>1</sup> 22 B.

<sup>2</sup> Herod. ii. 143.

<sup>3</sup> *A. S. Chron.*, s. a. 549, 552. Hengist and Horsa, described as the first English chieftains to arrive in Britain, about 449, are stated to have been great-great-grandsons of Woden.

Such critical investigation as that of the traditions about the foundations of the French Church carried on by Mgr. Duchesne, and of the story of the holy house of Loretto carried on by M. Ulysse Chevallier in our own day, may have made the scholars who carried them on unpopular with those interested in the local sanctities affected, just in the same way as any questionings of such would anywhere in antiquity, or in parts of the world still unaffected by modern ways of thinking. Such zeal for local sanctities and privileges has at various times led to grave dishonesty, which yet those who practised it would have called pious. The great Lanfranc, as Dr. Boehmer's researches<sup>1</sup> have shown, forged wholesale in the interests of the primacy of Canterbury. In quite recent times some monks at Jerusalem are said to have deliberately destroyed by night an inscription of the time of Constantine, discovered by monks of another order, which made it plain that a certain sacred site lay outside instead of inside their own precincts. Such conflicts between historical criticism and local legend are indeed made possible only by the existence of the former. But they do not imply the sacredness of a particular history as history, although no doubt the popular consciousness of Christendom has often made little distinction. The very criticism which thus shows itself inimical to local legend is the outcome of the same growth of a historical sense which makes possible the notion of an 'historical element' in religion in what I have reckoned as the second use of that expression. It is to be remarked that, although what has passed for sacred history may often have included much that is merely legendary, the authorized theology of Christendom has never placed the local mythology of which I have given instances, however widespread the cult with which it has been connected, on a level with the sacred history properly so called; although within somewhat narrow limits there has been divergence

<sup>1</sup> *Die Fälschungen Erzbischof Lanfranks von Canterbury*, Leipzig, 1902.

of opinion as to what the sacred history does or does not include.

Thus sacred history properly so called must be distinguished from mere mythology; and this distinction is at least one of the reasons why the estimation enjoyed by Revealed Theology, in Christendom at any rate, has differed from that enjoyed by the Mythical Theology of Varro in antiquity, even where not divorced, as to some degree in the Greek, and to a considerably greater extent in the Roman religion of classical times, from Civil Theology. This is also why, if we study the course of philosophical speculation on the nature of Christianity in modern times (as may be done for example in Professor Pffeiderer's well-known *History of the Philosophy of Religion on the basis of its History*<sup>1</sup>), we find that the question whether the sacred history is *trust-worthy* or no does not stand alone; the question of the relation of history to necessary truth, whether metaphysical or moral, is constantly crossing and recrossing it. This has often led to a refusal on the part of men fully conscious of the dubious character of much of the sacred records simply to dismiss them as dubious, since they were not sure but that they were bound up with truths which were not thus dubious, and yet which seemed not to have been attained or perhaps to be attainable apart from the record. It has also led indirectly to a greater amount of careful attention bestowed upon the documents to whose evidence such high importance was attached than has probably been enjoyed by any other documents whatsoever.

But our present purpose will be sufficiently served if we content ourselves with observing that, so far as by 'historical element in religion' we mean the element of sacred history, a belief in which forms an important element in some religions, it is a mark of higher development in a religion to emphasize this element. For in the recognition of such a sacred

<sup>1</sup> Eng. tr. by A. Stewart and A. Menzies, Williams & Norgate, 1886-7.



history religion comes to recognize itself as the most concrete and individual form of human experience, concerned not with mere abstract universals but with concrete individuals, those and no others, in which, and not elsewhere, the universals with which we have to do are, as a matter of fact, particularized, and apart from which they possess no actual reality. A religion which involves as part of its essence a sacred history is, in this way, at a higher level than one which, while setting forth certain universal principles, moral or metaphysical, is ready to symbolize them by anything that comes to hand as it were, and is comparatively indifferent to the particular symbol chosen. Thus a religion which, having developed a theology, regards the narratives which are associated with it as mere illustrative stories, ranks below one which regards them as the actual form which the universal principles have taken and could not but have taken in a world wherein reason is throughout immanent, and all must be rationally necessary, although we cannot always see into the necessity. The view of the world here implied makes the world more thoroughly rational and so more adequate as a manifestation of God and as the home of religious faith, than the world supposed by in the forms of religion above described, in which the divine reality remains, so to speak, indifferent to its mode of manifestation. We may moreover say, I think, that this great emphasis on a sacred history is connected also with a greater *individualism* in religion. Religion is from the first a social function, and in its earlier stages the notion of an individual's religion differing from that of his people would probably be unintelligible. This does not mean that there is nothing of the nature of individual religious experience even in the religions of the lower culture. My colleague, Dr. Marett, has shown very clearly in some lectures which he delivered not very long ago on the 'making of a medicine-man' how far from true such an assertion would be.<sup>1</sup> Still the religious experiences of

<sup>1</sup> Cp. his *Anthropology*, pp. 246 ff.

individuals, whether at the initiation which all boys must pass through, or those additional experiences which fall to the lot of those who become what we call medicine-men, are all in the closest connexion with the tribal life; they accompany the beginning of full membership in the tribal society or of what we may describe as a public ministry in it. Nor to the end of the chapter is this social character, both of religion in general and of those more vivid experiences which attend the awakening of the individual to full consciousness of the religious life of his community, by any means lost. Yet it is true that it is a mark of a higher development in religion, that religion should be regarded as a possession of the individual soul and not merely as an aspect of communal life. The view often expressed in modern times that a man's religion is just that which is most of all his private concern, just that about him with which the community has least right to meddle, is no doubt one-sided, and overlooks certain aspects of the religious experience quite as essential as those which it recognizes. But it is—that is what I here wish to insist upon—the exaggeration of a state of mind which belongs to an advanced stage of religious development. Now the emphasis on a sacred history is, as compared with ritual, a feature of religion which is closely linked with religious individualism. It was not a mere accident that the Protestant Reformation in its effort to emancipate the individual conscience set up the Bible against the Church. It is no doubt true that reverence for a sacred book may become as much a fetter for the private conscience as submission to an ecclesiastical tradition; and that the greater fixity of the former—*littera scripta manet*, as the proverb says—makes the religion of a book less elastic, less susceptible of gradual adaptation of itself to new knowledge and new ways of living than one where the final authority is the living voice of a community and a tradition which can change almost

insensibly in a fresh environment. Yet it is true that the possession of a sacred book makes possible for all who can read it a way of exercising their religion which renders the individual to a considerable extent independent of public worship and of the authorities which control it. 'Reading the Bible at home' may be a serious rival to 'Church-going', and it is by a true instinct that those who have desired to keep individuals in close union with the public ritual and with the priesthood have often tended to discourage the translation of sacred books into the vernacular, and their dissemination among the laity. It is remarkable that no religion has established less distinction between the clergy and the laity than that which, of the great religions of the world (for the religion of the Sikhs, which might even more appropriately be so called, has not spread beyond that people), has borne most exclusively the character of a book-religion, namely, Islam. We have thus shown that where the 'historical element in religion' means the possession and high estimation of a sacred history, we have something which marks a higher development of religion than one in which there is nothing of the kind; it implies a fuller recognition of the thoroughly concrete character of the religious experience, and a greater opportunity for individual appropriation of it.

But the expression 'historical element in religion' may be, as we saw, used in a wider sense. Sacred history, in the sense in which we have just been discussing it, is not present, or at least not important, in every religion which we should call 'higher'. The Romans had none, and if it is true that Homer was in one sense the 'Bible of the Greeks', the saying at once indicates that they had in our sense no Bible at all.<sup>1</sup> But every religion which has really been practised,

<sup>1</sup> No doubt in later times it was attempted to utilize Homer as such, in a way which would have surprised a remoter antiquity, in rivalry with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures—as when in his letter to Arsacius, pontiff

whether it has a sacred history in this sense or no, includes an historical element in the sense of including practices whose obligation is not to be explained apart from reference to positive enactments of inspired persons, or of the State, or to circumstances and traditions peculiar to the people or community by whom the religion was practised. We cannot come to a conclusion respecting the true character of Natural Religion without arriving at some view as to the significance of the historical element in this wider sense, with which by common consent what is called Natural Religion is always contrasted.

It may be held that the element of chief value in religion is that which, when disengaged from its husk of traditional ritual and legend, appeals to the sympathy and intelligence of every man irrespective of his nationality or creed. To assent to the law of gravitation one need not be an Englishman, nor to see that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles need one be a Greek ; and in the same way all men alike may find interesting the stories of Joseph and his brethren, of the return of Odysseus, of the jealousy of Othello ; while on the other hand the Frenchman cannot feel as the Englishman does about the death of Nelson, nor can the associations of our Christmas festivities be for a Mohammedan what they are for a Christian. Those things in religion, the appeal of which meets with a universal response, whether they be statements about the essential and eternal nature of reality, apprehended by the reason as true in their own right, from whatever source they have been learned, or whether they be precepts of conduct, the moral obligatoriness of which, when once propounded, is also perceived, as Kant would say, *a priori*, these will constitute, so it has seemed to some, *Natural* of Galatia (preserved by Sozomen, v. 16), the Emperor Julian found a sanction in the example of Eumaeus, the swineherd in the *Odyssey*, for the charity to the sick and poor as such, which Christianity had made a necessary feature of any religion that could hope to win the allegiance of his age.

*Religion*; and the systematic exhibition of what belongs to this natural religion will be *Natural Theology*; abstraction being made of all which, whether as dogma or as precept, appeals only to the members of a particular community. This view may be taken without any pretence that what is thus disengaged as the universally valid or rational element in religion was at first present alone, and that the historical element was only subsequently associated with it. It may be combined with a prudent recognition of the difficulty which sometimes besets the task of disengaging it—especially in the sphere of morality—for men who after all must themselves have been bred, if not in a particular religious community, at least in some society permeated by ideas due to some religious tradition or other. And, so far as the disengagement is accomplished, I should not doubt that the maintainers of such a view are right in insisting that, where a certain doctrine or precept is really seen to be true or good of itself, we can ask no more; it is no more and no less true, no more and no less good, because of the quarter from which our acquaintance with it is derived; any more than, when we have *seen* the necessary truth of a proposition in Euclid, Euclid's authority can add anything to it, or, though we may have learned it first from some very inaccurate text-book, will any doubt about it on that score remain. That there should be in this sense truths and precepts of 'natural religion' (if so we please to call it) is indeed necessary if we are to judge at all of the superiority or inferiority of one religion to another. As a matter of fact, we all of us *do* esteem one religion above another, when we allow ourselves to compare them at all, according as it teaches what we judge (independently) to be true and commands what we judge (independently) to be right; nor in practice are even those writers an exception to this rule who, whether in the interest of a particular 'revelation', or in that of a universal empiricism, deny the existence of



objective standards of right and wrong, if not also of truth and falsehood.

The analogy suggested just above of a necessary truth in mathematics, apprehended as such, may serve to suggest two points to us upon which it is important to lay stress, one a point of agreement between exact science and theology, the other a point of difference between them. In the first place it will be observed that, in the case of mathematical truth, the source from which a proposition has been learned becomes indifferent, when once the proposition has been apprehended as necessarily true. The rôle of 'authority' ends with the commending of a certain proposition to the attention of a learner; it has no place in 'science' properly so called. From this it is evident that the parallel which is sometimes drawn between the acceptance of mathematical axioms as beyond question and the acceptance of speculative dogmas or historical statements on the authority of a sacred book or Church is quite misleading. There is no claim for sacrosanctity made for mathematical or scientific axioms, no withdrawal of them from examination when they have once been accepted. If they are not submitted to further investigation, this is only because they are seen to be self-evident; it is only because we are sure that, whenever re-examined, they will be seen as before to be self-evident that we do not re-examine them. In the case alleged to be parallel a sacrosanctity is asserted to which there is nothing corresponding in science, and which has its analogue in the veneration accorded in a civil state to the fundamental principles of its constitution; self-evidence indeed is seldom even claimed for the speculative dogmas of the particular historical religions, and can never be claimed for historical statements at all. To decide that one will treat as true something about which one is not sure whether it is true or not, may sometimes be practically justified; but it will not be an intellectual decision, and it can only lead to confusion to call it by that

name. One has no more right to speak as if one *knew* after one has made such a decision than before. In disputing the tenableness of the alleged parallel between the acceptance of mathematical axioms and of religious dogmas, I have used the word 'self-evidence' in the sense in which it belongs to axioms and to the simplest statements of necessary truth. But of course wherever we *see* that anything *must* be so-and-so, we must see it in that thing *itself*, and so whatever is necessarily true is really self-evident, if it is evident at all and not merely taken on trust, although we may not be able to *see* it without a considerable amount of investigation and discrimination. The first point, then, which the analogy between exact science and theology brings out is that whenever and wherever we see in either that something *must* be so-and-so, we become so far indifferent to the question who or what first called our attention to it. We may feel gratitude to our teacher or informant, but in any statement of what we now *know*, there will be no mention of the teacher or source of information ; who our teacher or informant was may even be uncertain or forgotten. But if this is so, in allowing the name of Natural Theology to our religious *knowledge* in this sense (if any such there be), we are plainly not distinguishing it from any other kind of theology or religious knowledge in respect of the source from which it reached us, or of the way in which we have arrived at it ; whereas in Bacon's definition of Natural Theology<sup>1</sup> he does distinguish it just in this way. These have now, however, as we have seen, become indifferent to us. Whoever made us acquainted with the truth, however we acquired the knowledge of it, now we see that thus it is and must be. Natural Theology thus understood can be distinguished only from mere *opinion* on religious matters. Certainly it cannot be distinguished from *revealed* theology, if, as I have elsewhere tried to show, revelation can only mean truth in religion ; if only so far as

<sup>1</sup> Quoted above, p. 2.

it is *known* is any religious truth properly *revealed*. Nor can it be known except through revelation, unless we suppose that we can, like Actaeon or Prometheus in the fables, surprise or steal the secrets of God against his will.<sup>1</sup> It follows from this that those who have not been careful to distinguish *antecedently* between religious dogmas in which the light of nature is sufficient and others in which it is insufficient (as St. Thomas Aquinas did, and as modern Roman Catholic scholars are apt to apologize for the failure of St. Anselm and other older writers to do) are, if I am right, quite justified in holding the distinction to be one which can only be discovered at a later stage. For whenever we can see that this or that *must* be true of God, it has then passed into the sphere of rational or, if we like, 'natural' theology, whether it has been divined so far only by the adherents of a particular creed or by thinkers working in independence of that or of any other creed.

I said above that there was another point which the analogy of theology and exact science would bring to light ; and that it would, unlike the first point, be a point of difference, not of agreement, between them.

It will be said by some : This is all very well ; in the abstract we may be prepared to admit that *if* any religious doctrines were evidently necessary in the way in which certain propositions in the exact sciences are, they would constitute a natural theology which could stand side by side with what we call science. But where will you find such ? There exists no such general agreement in theology as in the exact sciences, or even in the natural sciences which we should not call exact. Notoriously if, for example's sake, we take the assertion of the existence of God and of the freedom and immortality of the human soul, which are represented as the fundamental doctrines of religion in the system examined as ' Rational Theology ' by Kant in his *Critique of*

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 25, 26.

*Pure Reason*, not only do some or all of these assertions appear to hosts of thinking men—probably to the large majority of those who would be called pre-eminently ‘scientific men’—as highly dubious, and to many evidently false; but even among the great historic religions there is no agreement upon them. Buddhism has no God, Calvinism denies free-will, immortality was not taught in the earlier books of the Old Testament, nor accepted by the Sadducean school of Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era. The nearest that one can get, it will be said, to indubitable truths in theology is in a kind of metaphysical statement which, when examined, is found, apart from a fallacy arising from the associations of language, to have nothing at all to do with the object of religion, with anything that can properly be called God, but to relate only to a characterless Absolute or the bare abstraction of Something or of Being. Now this is so far true that the search for universally admitted propositions in theology will not be rewarded by many discoveries; and the metaphysical statements about the nature of being which have often figured in theological treatises as part of the account *de Deo* have, apart from a certain kind of experience—an experience of which a certain kind of emotion is a necessary constituent,—no religious significance at all. Such statements are, however, not irrelevant where such experience is present, for they enter into the reflective analysis of the object of that experience, which is always (as I have elsewhere maintained<sup>1</sup>) in some sense the ultimate heart and ground of reality; nor are they without a propaedeutic value as tending to remove an inhibition of our natural aspiration towards the Absolute, Infinite, and Eternal by such philosophical prejudices as bear the names of Positivism, Phenomenalism, Relativism, and the like.

The nearest approach to generally admitted propositions

<sup>1</sup> *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 142.

in theology will belong to moral precepts, and it is, as I have said, mainly by means of an independent judgement upon these—though also in some degree by reference to statements of a theoretical kind about the universe according as they agree more or less with our independently formed scientific and metaphysical convictions—that we do, as a matter of fact, rank religions *inter se*. Still, the point made above is not proved to be simply nugatory by the impossibility of finding in theology propositions as generally admitted as those in the sciences. For, after all, many propositions are generally admitted in the sciences themselves which are not what we should call self-evident, and it is quite true that we do in theology meet with statements, moral precepts and others, to which we assent on their intrinsic evidence or on evidence which is independent of the authority of the source from which they were conveyed to us, just as in the sciences. And in the case of these we must admit the right to judge of them in this independent way, and indeed, apart from some exercise of this right, it is not easy to see how any authority could come by acceptance except in a community in which it had never been questioned. Nay, we find that even some who are ready to call upon us to submit implicitly to some such authority, are prepared to require of us the use of reason in order to its acceptance, though after acceptance reason is to be immolated, like an evil beast, to use Luther's expression, as an acceptable sacrifice to God: *Deo gratissimum sacrificium et cultum*.<sup>1</sup> We shall also be justified in recognizing that statements which we do *not* see to be intrinsically true, but which we find commended to us by an authority in whose competence we are inclined to believe, are expressions only of probable opinion. There is

<sup>1</sup> Luther *in Galat.* iii. 6 'Fides rationem mactat et occidit illam bestiam quam totus mundus et omnes creaturae occidere non possunt . . . Sed fides in eo [*sc.* Abraham] vicit, mactavit et sacrificavit rationem acerrimum et pestilentissimum hostem Dei. Ita pii fide mactant bestiam, maiorem mundo atque per hoc Deo gratissimum sacrificium et cultum exhibent.'



a like difference between genuine moral judgements made when we actually perceive for ourselves the goodness of the conduct judged, and judgements made when the conduct judged is not perceived by us to be good in itself but is commended to us by an authority, obedience to whose commands we judge to be right, or whose character we judge to be so good that we believe in the goodness of what is proved to be harmonious with it, even though that goodness is not, apart from this authority, evident to ourselves. We do judge some things to be right in reliance on such authority, just as we should similarly be disposed to say of some passage in a poet or composer whose other work we have perceived for ourselves to be beautiful that, being his, it is probably really beautiful, though we do not actually feel its beauty for ourselves—we probably do not, as we say, *understand* it.<sup>1</sup>

But there is after all a difference between Religion and what we commonly call Science in that the connexion of religious doctrine and religious knowledge with the personality of the teacher and the discoverer is far closer than the like connexion in the case of scientific doctrine and scientific knowledge. It is noticeable that whatever gratitude the scientific man may feel to the pioneers of his science, with whatever interest this gratitude may lead him to study their works, no one expects the student of mechanics to be sent for his instruction to Archimedes, the student of astronomy to Hipparchus, or the student of medicine to Hippocrates. The works of the masters in these sciences are continually being antiquated by the progress of the sciences, and their conclusions detached from their original context. Their personality was a condition of what they did, but it does

<sup>1</sup> I should here like to refer to some excellent remarks on the whole subject of thinking on matters other than those called scientific in Dr. Bosanquet's Gifford Lectures on *The Principle of Individuality and Value* (p. 62).

not enter into their results. On the other hand, while no doubt all the great founders and prophets of religion say things which become antiquated, religion cannot dispense with the constant return upon them; their remote disciples must go back and drink afresh from the fountain of their inspiration; their teaching cannot be reduced to a formula which abstracts from their personality, as the law of gravitation is expressed in a formula which abstracts altogether from that of Newton. Thus we have the paradox of which to us the most familiar, as it is the most complete, example lies in the contrast between the insistence of the Founder of Christianity that he was not come in his own name but in his Father's and the fact that, wherever Christianity has been a living religion, it has been not a system of teaching, but Christ himself, his own personality, that his Church has understood him to offer as the special gift which he had to bestow; since only in union with that personality can his followers share in the experience of sonship to God which was his. This is not only the most familiar but also the most complete example because, little as Buddhism can dispense with the personality of Gautama or Islam with that of Mohammed, the doctrine of many Buddhas beside Gautama in the one, the insistence on the merely prophetic dignity of Mohammed in the other, exclude in the case of these religions the assertion of so intimate a unity between the message and the prophet as is characteristic of the Christian religion. Thus a circumstance which, when we come to those higher 'historical religions' which exist side by side with the sciences, essentially distinguishes religion from science, is seen in Christianity in its most highly developed form. Religion is thus obviously here akin not so much to science as to *art*. In art also, although Goethe, for example, had a deeper and more complex experience to express than had Homer, yet we cannot and do not think of the work of great poets or artists of ancient times as out

of date, as having a merely historical and antiquarian interest. Their results cannot be separated from the form in which they presented them, a form thoroughly individual and characteristic of their own personality. That is why the extent to which they can be appreciated in translations is limited ; why we laugh at the story of the mathematician who asked about *Paradise Lost*, 'What does it *prove*?' The products of religious genius also are thoroughly individual ; individual either in the strict sense as expressive of the personality of some inspired teacher ; or at least as expressive of the corporate personality of some race or school. And with the progress of religious development more and more does religion demand individual appropriation in the recipients of the prophetic message ; less and less can religious duties be done by proxy, more and more is the stress laid on the presence of religion in the *heart* of every man that makes profession of it. And though, no doubt, we may find something analogous to this in the necessity for genuine scientific progress that scientific workers should not merely take on trust the experience of predecessors or contemporaries, but make it as far as possible their own by a thorough study and comprehension of it, yet it can scarcely be denied that in religion the relative importance of this personal appropriation, not only by a few but by all who take part in it, is considerably greater than in the case of science.

Can we then regard religion as a kind of art ? To do this would be to renounce, not perhaps all theology (for there is a systematic criticism of art and so there may be also of religion), but certainly all *natural* theology in the sense of a doctrine to which the common reason must assent apart from any special relation to a particular community or a particular teacher. We have seen none the less that there is doctrine which at least commends itself to the common reason ; and we shall part company with the whole tradition of the higher religions if we deny the words 'true' and 'false' to be applicable

to the statements connected with them in a sense in which they cannot be used of poems or pictures or musical compositions. We do indeed speak of true and false art, but we certainly should not regard this as referring to a distinction such as exists between the proposition, 'Charles I wrote *Eikon Basilike*,' and the proposition, 'Charles I did not write *Eikon Basilike*.' On the other hand, we do naturally inquire in just that sense of the words whether, e. g., the statements that God is a person or that our own souls are immortal are statements true or false. This is so, even though we may come to see that the answer to such questions cannot be given without a criticism of the terms used from which a crude rationalism dispenses itself.

What is here nearest akin to Religion is certainly Philosophy. There, too, there is a form of statement like that used by the sciences. The philosopher indeed claims that he has to do with genuine knowledge, freed from the merely general or hypothetical, the abstract or departmental character which belongs to the sciences. But it is clear that the philosophies of Plato or Aristotle, of Spinoza or Leibnitz, of Kant or Hegel, are too intimately associated with the personality of their authors to be understood apart from the form in which they issued from their authors' minds. They, like the teachings of the prophets in religion, are not antiquated with the progress of thought. We turn back again and again to learn of these great masters, whose results no history of philosophy can so give us that we can dispense with the first-hand study of their writings, in which their personality is expressed.

It should not surprise any one that Religion and Philosophy should thus share in common a character which distinguishes both from Science on the one hand and from Art on the other. The ordinary man always regards them as very closely akin. He is apt to look upon philosophy either as an apology for religion or as a substitute for it. The ordinary man's view

as to the ultimate nature of the world in which he finds himself and of his relation to it is expressed in his religion ; and it is a view of the ultimate nature of reality and of man's relation to it that philosophy also aims at attaining. Yet closely akin as they are, neither can take the place of the other. To philosophy as a 'contemplation', in the Platonic phrase, 'of all time and all existence', the religious experience, like every other form of experience, supplies data. A philosophy which did not reflect as freely upon religious experience as upon any other, or one which attended only to religious experience, would be an incomplete philosophy, which did not fully understand its business. But reflecting on the religious experience is not the same thing as enjoying it ; though, except it be in some measure enjoyed, it cannot become the object of philosophical reflection, since only through enjoyment of it can it be known in the first instance at all. On the other hand, though religion can and often does exist without philosophy, though it may even be said that at a certain level of intelligence it performs some functions which philosophy performs at another, yet the consciousness of God as present in the heart is not the same thing as the articulation in thought of the ultimate nature of reality ; nor has philosophizing about that ultimate nature any inherent power to induce consciousness of a present God in the heart. Yet, where the philosophical impulse exists, there, unless the reason be allowed to play freely upon it, religion will be dwarfed to superstition or poisoned by secret doubt ; while, where the reason is thus given its freedom, the religious spirit will, in its turn, inspire the philosophizing, as it must inspire every other task which the religious man undertakes. But religion must not determine whither the argument is to carry us ; that its own nature must determine ; just as, although, as George Herbert says :

Who sweeps a room as for God's laws  
Makes that and the action fine,



yet where the broom is to go must be determined not by devout fancy, but wholly by the situation of the dust ; else neither the room nor the action will be fine.

I have been led away from my main course to discuss this problem of the mutual relations of Philosophy to Religion because it is a problem of much interest, about which great difficulty has been felt. But what I began by insisting upon was the kinship of religion and philosophy in respect of their combination of an intellectual apprehension of reality (shown in the scientific form of statement used in both) with a refusal to abstract from individual personality as the sciences do, a combination which marks them as alike belonging to the most concrete, and so to the highest, level of our experience.

It is just because of this combination that, although we may recognize a distinction between theological statements which are unintelligible except in reference to the history of a particular community, and others which appeal to the common reason and judgement of mankind, and may regard the latter as constituting Natural Theology, no fixed principle can be alleged which divides the two divisions of theology—we will call them Natural and Historical<sup>1</sup>—in such a way as to enable one to parcel out theology into certain doctrines which must of their own nature lie on one side, and others which must of their own nature lie on the other side of the dividing line. While it is not difficult to agree to this view in regard to what for the moment we may call speculative dogmas, it might seem that what we might call *narrative statements* must always lie on the 'historical' side of the line. Historical fact—that such an event happened at such a place at such a time—cannot be ascertained *a priori* ; it can only be ascertained by actual observation or by report. This is no doubt true, but while on the one hand the knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> 'Revealed' we saw would not do as the antithesis of 'Natural' in this sense, since all knowledge respecting God must be considered to be revealed.

an historical event as such is not religious knowledge at all, though it may lead to such, on the other hand, while no historical fact can be converted by any legerdemain into a necessary truth of reason, certain historical facts may be sufficiently substantiated to be universally accepted, and may in this capacity be admitted into the sphere of Natural Theology as above described. It would seem, however, that these will not be alleged facts of a quite unusual kind, said to have occurred in former times where no satisfactory examination of the evidence is possible (as with, at any rate, most of the miracles said to have attended the inauguration of the historical religions), but rather such facts as the reformation of manners wrought by the influence of a religion in the world, the production by it of noble types of moral character, and so forth; the evidence for which may be writ large on the pages of the history of civilization, and can often be tested here and now.

We may here ask in what sense, if any, there can be a universal religion at all. The question is similar to that whether there can be a universal State. There have been ideals of a common religion in which the diversities which characterize variously the religions of different people should simply have disappeared, as there have been ideals of a universal State in which national peculiarities should simply be effaced. Such were in fashion in the *Saeculum Rationa-listicum*; they are out of fashion in an age dominated by the conception of evolution or development, and priding itself on its 'historical sense'. Our ideal in either case would rather be one of mutual recognition of peculiarities as valuable in themselves and as contributing to the manifold riches of the whole. There is nothing in this inconsistent in either case with the development of a structure expressive of the unity which has gradually manifested itself in and through the aboriginal diversity; or with the relationship between the structures of certain of the systems afterwards

drawn together into one and the structure of the resulting organization of the whole, being a closer relationship than that which the structure of others among these systems bears to that same resulting organization. But a difficulty presents itself in the case of religion which does not occur in the case of social or political organization. Here again this difficulty is presented by a feature which the higher religions exhibit more than the lower, and Christianity most of all; it is indeed found further back in the history of religious development, but it becomes much more conspicuous at the higher levels. This feature is represented by the putting forward of statements of fact, which must be true or false, in the form of dogmas or of creeds. The creeds of different religions not merely differ from, but contradict one another. Now differences may exist together, but contradictories cannot both be true. Without venturing to affirm that nothing like this occurs also in the case of different political societies, we must admit that it is a far less important characteristic in their case than in that of different religions. There is then a quite similar difficulty in ranking the relation of Religion to religions with the relation of Society to societies, as we found before to prevent our assimilating the relation of Religion to religions to the relation of Art in general to the various forms of artistic expression to which individual genius has given birth. Here again, however, the difficulty is shared by Religion with Philosophy. We must remember that in the last resort the recognition of various types of religion as persisting in the religion of all men means (as Schleiermacher saw) the recognition of a different religion for every genuinely religious individual, the uniqueness of whose individuality must thus express itself in the uniqueness of his religion. Here religion is more like art than like social organization; yet it cannot be merely individual (although, as Plato has taught us, the organization of the soul of the member of a society presents the same principles

of structure as the organization of the society of which he is a member) since it has its dwelling in the relations of individuals to one another ; while Religion, when it is most fully itself, dwells in the individual heart as Art in the individual imagination, though, of course, in either case in the heart or imagination of an individual whose life is not shut off from those of others like that of the idiot or madman ; on the contrary the prophet or artist is a man with a special gift of communicating to others his thought and emotion. We may here recall Leibnitz's celebrated system of a pre-established harmony among windowless monads as a representation which was intended should reconcile the demands of individuality and also of unity. According to this system there is a universe which each monad reflects from its own point of view : each monad develops its own nature by itself, but the result is a harmonious universe. There are grave difficulties in this theory, but we may avail ourselves of it here to suggest a language in which to express what we have now arrived at. Philosophies apprehend the universe, Religions apprehend God, from various points of view, some more, some less perfectly ; there is a harmony in which many notes can be combined and their discords reconciled ; and this resultant harmony is not something which *merely* results, though we so reach it ; it could not result, except by sheer miraculous accident, were it not also *there* from the first, dominating the whole—were it not, in Leibnitzian language, pre-established. There may be mistakes, false starts, in our attempts to discover the harmony. Statements may be made (to leave the metaphor for the fact) which are really erroneous. Even such statements would not be made without some genuine experience to suggest them ; but the statement mixes the declaration of that experience with error. The difficulty will meet us here as elsewhere—but not otherwise here than elsewhere—of understanding how errors arise at all ; for, though each error in its turn may

be accounted for, and although it is just the nature of errors (if I may be allowed the bull) to have no common or general nature—yet it is, I think, useless to pretend that the occurrence of errors and illusions in the course of the experience by which we advance to the knowledge of reality and to the vision of God is not a real puzzle. To equate error or illusion with mere imperfection of knowledge is not, I feel sure, correct. That there is no error without truth, no illusion without an appearance of some reality, I should readily admit ; but to say that error is only one-sided truth, illusion only an apprehension of part instead of the whole of reality, is not only to provide a general definition of error and illusion, a thing which I doubt if we can reasonably attempt ; it is also to ignore the fact that we can quite well conceive an apprehension of a particular reality which we know not to be the whole of reality, and in our apprehension of which, therefore, there is no error or illusion at all, although we do not apprehend along with it all that actually co-exists with it and to which it is in various ways related. Nothing is gained by not confessing that we have here a problem demanding a solution which yet we cannot find ; but, on the other hand, nothing is gained by neglecting to observe how intimately intertwined are the experiences which give rise to this problem with those which, by leading us to see in the reality which we experience the presence of reason and order, are just what makes it a problem for us. We may reasonably conclude that mere scepticism or pessimism is not the right attitude to adopt in view of it, but rather the *faith* which, without pretending to see where it does not see, yet from the instances in which what we should call evil has been seen as contributing to a larger good, so that we would not have had it away, learns that fuller experience might so justify elsewhere what is still in need of justification. The admission that there *are* errors and illusions in religion and in philosophy allows us to make another admission.



We have insisted that the sphere of Natural Theology is not marked off from that of Historical Theology by a sharp line of demarcation, and we may recognize that, for example, a precept may be generally agreed upon as good, while yet it is essentially a precept which is for some only ; thus I think it right that you should love your parents with a filial affection—and that this is essentially part of the system of the good life for the whole world of men—yet plainly this means that it is you, not I, who must honour them thus, because, as an historical fact, they are your parents and not mine. Yet, despite all this, we may admit that there will be parts of historical theology—speculative dogmas, historical statements, precepts of conduct,—which with the advance to a universal theology must be discarded ; discarded, however, not simply as being historical, but on the ground in each case that we have reason to think that this or that is not in accordance with the nature of reality, that this or that event did not occur, that such or such behaviour is not good.

So far we have been dealing with the question, What is the sphere of Natural Theology ? We have arrived at the conclusion that it is the sphere of general reflection upon the objects of religious experience, so far as this experience is open to all men and not peculiar to a particular race, community, or individual. No hard and fast line can be drawn between what is admitted into Natural Theology and what is not ; the test can only be the existence of general agreement in the experience discussed. Hence where (as in the Middle Ages in Western Europe) a community of civilized and thinking men share the experience belonging to a particular religious community and come but little into contact with the heirs of a different experience, a good deal will be admitted into Natural Theology which will be excluded from it by those whom an intercourse with men bred in quite different traditions has made aware that the experience

which has been their own is less widely shared than had been supposed by their less widely read, less travelled, or less critical predecessors. There will always be (as the history of Natural Theology abundantly shows) a danger of assuming that to be a matter of general assent which one has never questioned oneself only because of one's habituation to a certain tradition. A doctrinaire Natural Theology which attaches no value to historical religious tradition is in the irony of nature especially exposed to this danger: and the next generation finds historical prejudice and inherited superstition where its predecessors were confidently boasting of their possession of a truth guaranteed by universal consent as beyond dispute. There is one aspect of Natural Theology, as it has usually been understood, of which we seem in these lengthy and (I fear) somewhat involved discussions to have lost sight; and yet it is an aspect recognized in Varro's triple division of the *genera theologiae*, and also by the Letter I have so frequently quoted as addressed by the Founder of this Lecture to the Hebdomadal Council of the University of Oxford. I mean the aspect in which it consists of statements based upon the observation of what we call *natural phenomena*. So far as these statements describe the impression made upon 'the general heart of man' (to use a phrase of Wordsworth's) by the spectacle of nature, as it offers itself either to the ordinary observer or to the trained student of details in any department, they fall within the sphere of Natural Theology as I have described it; but it must be admitted that the impression of power and wisdom and the impression of goodness do not always go together. The impression of power and wisdom made on the mind by the phenomena of nature is genuine and perhaps inexpugnable. It will be remembered how Darwin<sup>1</sup> said that he never ceased to

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, i. 316 n.: 'The Duke of Argyll (*Good Words*, April 1885, p. 244) has recorded a few words on this subject, spoken by my father in the last years of his life . . . "In the course of that conversation I said

be visited by it, although it would fade away again. On the other hand the impression of goodness can perhaps only be received if we have gained it in the sphere of human life and of the great achievements of the human spirit in society, morality, art, philosophy, religion, wherein the God who is *hidden* in nature is more strictly said to *reveal* himself, but whose lineaments, once seen there, we may then trace where they are less evident.

In saying this I do not think I am going beyond the facts; it is a further question whether we could consistently work out the suggested conception of a wise and powerful but evil author of nature. This might well be found difficult or impossible, and if this were so, the very difficulty or impossibility would reinforce the 'arguments for the existence of God'.

But, if we thus cannot discover the goodness of God in nature apart from man, then there is always involved in Natural Theology what by some people is called anthropomorphism. And Natural Theology does not as it develops cease to be anthropomorphic, but rather passes in the course of its development from an unconscious anthropomorphism, in which human characteristics are read into nature incautiously and uncritically, to an anthropomorphism in which we consciously realize that, in interpreting nature as rational and spiritual, we are deliberately taking reason and spirit, which we know in ourselves, as therefore what is most intelligible, to which is to be referred and subordinated whatever, as immediately apprehended by us, is nature and not spirit. Thus the movements of the to Mr. Darwin, with reference to some of his own remarkable works on the 'Fertilization of Orchids' and upon the 'Earthworms' and various other observations he made of the wonderful contrivances for certain purposes in nature—I said it was impossible to look at these without seeing that they were the effect and the expression of mind. I shall never forget Mr. Darwin's answer. He looked at me very hard and said, 'Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times,' and he shook his head vaguely, adding, 'it seems to go away.' "

stars, on the belief in the divinity of which so much of the ancient Natural Theology turned, we now no longer assume to be the direct manifestation of a spiritual activity of higher rank than the human. On the contrary, so far as they are studied by astronomers, we regard them as mechanical, and if we go on to ascribe their origination to a world-ordering Reason or Spirit, we are fully conscious that this is because we think that only in relation to a nature of the kind which we directly experience in ourselves does the existence of such a mechanism become comprehensible to us. This change in the attitude of Natural Theology corresponds to, or rather is part of, a general difference in attitude between ancient and modern philosophy. Over this I will delay for a few minutes, because it is important in itself, and also is open to misinterpretation.

If we contrast the beginning of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* with that of Kant's *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten* we are at once struck by the difference of starting-point. Everything—says Aristotle in effect—aims at some good, and man is no exception to this rule. 'Nothing in the world or indeed out of it', says Kant, 'can be conceived possible which without qualification can be held to be good in itself, except a good will.' I am not here concerned with the particular doctrines about the nature of morality which are connected with these two ways of approaching the subject respectively. I only take them to illustrate this point, that to the ancient philosopher man is only one of the many things which we find existing in the world, and certainly not the highest or best of them; to the modern philosopher man as a rational being, and the only rational being within our experience, is the centre of the universe, which has no goodness except in relation to his will or a will like his. What change had passed over the spirit of philosophy between the two to explain this difference?

If at the risk, which such an attempt inevitably brings,

of over-simplification, we try to compress into a small compass the answer to this question, which lies in the whole history of European philosophy from Aristotle to Kant, we may, I think, put it in this way.

To the ancient Greeks man was only one of the things in the world in which he found himself, and not the highest or best of them. Such a view corresponded to the objectivity characteristic of ancient thought and (to recall ourselves to our immediate subject) of ancient religion ; which is marked by the absence of that introspective, self-examining habit, of mind, the development of which in later times was encouraged by the greater inwardness of Christian piety, and attained a classical form in the immortal *Confessions* of Augustine, a masterpiece not only of religious but of general introspective psychology. The thought of the Middle Ages was characterized by the attempt to thrust a new experience into an antique form. Hence the new subjectivity was only added on in a naïve fashion to the old objectivity. Man is only one of the things in the world, but he is the most important of them, and the rest were made for his sake. It was not until the appearance of Descartes that the starting-point of philosophy is sought in man's recognition of himself, not only as the most interesting both to himself and to God of all finite beings within his experience, but as, in his capacity of knower, the subject for which all else is object. Descartes's famous *Cogito ergo sum* and his recognition therein of self-consciousness as the bedrock of certainty and the starting-point of knowledge (whether we can admit it in the form in which he stated it or not) must be allowed to be epoch-making in philosophy. It is noticeable that Descartes's friend and correspondent Mersenne<sup>1</sup> and also Arnauld, the philosopher of Port Royal,<sup>2</sup> were struck by

<sup>1</sup> Descartes, *Œuvres*, i. 376, ii. 435, iii. 261 ; cp. iii. 247.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 186 ; vii. 205, 216 (*Obj.* 4<sup>th</sup> *ad Med.*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., pp. 286, 301).



the resemblance of Descartes's views on the soul to those of Augustine, that great master of the knowledge of the soul's life. Such an agreement between Descartes and Augustine typifies the emergence in the former as an explicit principle of thought of the new or Christian estimate of the human spirit, which the scholastic reverence for Aristotle, whose bonds Descartes cast away from him, had hitherto kept in check and not permitted so to express itself as to explode the traditional structure of the antique view of the world. The psychological bias which Descartes introduced into modern philosophy, which is illustrated by the substitution of the antitheses of Subject and Object, Mind and Matter, as the chief topics of philosophic discussion, for the ancient antithesis of Form and Matter, eventually worked itself out in the Kantian criticism. Here we have advanced what may fairly be called the paradoxical view that the activity of the human spirit in experience and knowledge is so far something exclusively its own, so far independent of the object experienced and known, that it renders it impossible for the human spirit to apprehend that object as it is in itself, and therefore (one would naturally suppose) to attain to real knowledge at all. Now it would of course be by no means an adequate treatment of the Kantian philosophy to suppose that when one had said this, one had said the last word upon it. The fundamental difficulties of the theory of knowledge set forth in the *Critique of Pure Reason* have recently been well exhibited in Mr. Prichard's remarkable book on *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*. Although a criticism of Kant's philosophy as a whole must take into account other parts of his teaching which it did not fall within Mr. Prichard's plan to review, and although, even with respect to the theory of knowledge, Mr. Prichard has not concerned himself with the history of Kant's doctrine as distinguished from its actual formulation, yet I am convinced that Mr. Prichard is right in his dissatis-

faction with the whole conception of a preliminary criticism of knowledge, which, as put forward by Kant, lies behind the Spencerian denial that we can know the Real and the psychologists' attempt to explain our apprehension of the external world, with which we are conversant in daily life and in the natural sciences, as somehow derived from what are at first mere states of our own minds.<sup>1</sup> Since the time of Kant, philosophy has been working back in various ways—sometimes by the way of a more thorough-going idealism which gets rid of Kant's 'thing-in-itself'—to what we may call a more objective view. A realistic philosophy, which is not to be purely reactionary and to stand convicted of mere indifference to the questions raised by Descartes and Locke, by Berkeley and Hume, by Kant and Fichte, by Hegel and Schopenhauer, must not treat Mind as an object among other objects. It must not take the objects of sense, just as they stand, for things-in-themselves. It must not refuse to follow the rhythm of the dialectic by which notions, when isolated and one-sidedly pressed, pass over into their opposites and call for a higher synthesis. Having once asked with Kant how knowledge is possible, it will insist that the very notion of knowledge implies that the object of knowledge is, as the object of knowledge, independent of the process by which it is known. It will decline to substitute a necessity of apprehension for an apprehension of necessity. It will refuse to assume that what is not an object of the senses must be therefore a mere mode or affection or creature of the mind. It will find that the objective attitude of ancient philosophy saved ancient philosophers from falling into some pitfalls into which their tendency to subjectivism has betrayed some moderns. But it will also recognize that this attitude

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. H. W. B. Joseph, 'The Psychological Explanation of the Development of the Perception of External Objects,' *Mind*, N.S., xix. 305 ff., 457 ff.; xx. 161 ff. (July 1910, Oct. 1910, Apr. 1911).

was rendered easier by the contrast between Mind and its objects not having been as yet brought into the prominence which modern philosophy has given it, or having received the attention with which it has since met.

The general movements of philosophical thought are, as one would expect, reflected in the history of Natural Theology. One is not surprised to find ancient Natural Theology discussing the nature of the gods, and the modern the nature of religion. To this distinction between the two Professor Pfleiderer in the first volume of his valuable *Philosophy of Religion on the basis of its History* calls attention; and rightly observes that of Philosophy of Religion 'in the wider sense of the term, according to which it denotes all reflection on religious subjects, it may with truth be said that it is as ancient as philosophy itself, indeed that it is the root of all other philosophy, since, as a matter of fact, among all peoples the earliest speculations have been of a religious nature and from these philosophy in general took its rise. If, however,' he continues, 'we understand Philosophy of Religion in the narrower, and, strictly speaking, the only proper sense, according to which it is the systematic, scientific investigation and comprehension of the totality of phenomena which in the life of man compose religion, it must rather be regarded as the most recent of all the departments of Philosophy, as in this sense it is quite modern, scarcely more than 200 years old. And this' (I am still quoting from Professor Pfleiderer) 'is intelligible enough. For to the scientific comprehension of religion as a whole two conditions are obviously indispensable. In the first place, Religion must be presented in experience as a fact by itself, clearly distinguished from the other phases of social and especially of civil life. Secondly, there must also be a real Philosophy—one, that is, in which investigation is independent of external authorities, rests on its own basis and is scientific, and in which knowledge is logically

consistent. The former of these two conditions was wanting throughout antiquity; hence the Greek philosophers, who indeed frequently speculated regarding the divine nature and the gods, never made religion as a whole, as a special department of the life both of the individual and of society, the subject of their systematic inquiry. With Christianity religion for the first time appeared as an independent fact clearly distinguished alike from politics, art, and science, and thereupon accordingly thoroughgoing philosophical comprehension of it became for the first time possible. But for the realization of this possibility the second essential requirement—the independence of science—was in the early and mediaeval periods of Christianity still lacking. The Fathers and the Schoolmen did indeed make an abundant use of the ideas of Greek philosophy, neither was there wanting to them a speculation of their own of a specifically Christian character, and their skill in the use of the formal dialectic was developed to marvellous perfection; but with all that their thinking was never an independent scientific investigation, but was throughout, though in different degrees, dominated by presuppositions furnished in the faith of the Church, whether in the form of a still somewhat undefined general consciousness or of a dogma fixed by ecclesiastical authority. As long accordingly as any distinction is made between Dogmatic Theology and the Philosophy of Religion . . . so long we cannot recognize any Philosophy of Religion in the strict sense either in Patristic or Scholastic times.’<sup>1</sup> So far Professor Pfleiderer. Now, from this passage much that is true may be learned respecting the difference which exists between the religious speculation of Europe in ancient, mediaeval, and modern times respectively; but in my judgement it over-emphasizes these differences, and, while it is quite intelligible that a writer should wish to begin his account of the history of the

<sup>1</sup> Eng. tr., i, pp. 1, 2.

philosophy of religion with Spinoza after a preparatory glance at a few leading thinkers who, in the course of the three centuries which preceded that of Spinoza, may be said to have prepared the way for later thought on the subject, it was unnecessary in justifying his neglect of the previous history to suggest that little or nothing to our purpose is to be learned from it. It would not, however, be reasonable to spend time now on the examination of this introductory passage of Professor Pfleiderer's book, if it were not that Professor Pfleiderer's attitude towards ancient and mediaeval thought on religious subjects is something more than an idiosyncrasy, if it did not illustrate widely-spread habits of mind, and if, moreover, it were not the key to some things which one finds open to criticism in his treatment of the history of the philosophy of religion in a book which is sometimes very deservedly taken—for example, in the *Theological Tripos* of the University of Cambridge—as a standard account of the subject. It makes the statement of Professor Pfleiderer all the better worth a careful scrutiny, that, as I shall shortly point out, he is not at all an extreme representative of the dominant tendency to throw the emphasis in theology on to the subjective or psychological side; indeed he is on the whole an opponent of the more marked forms of this tendency; and this gives instances of its appearance in his own plan a special importance.

If religion is or, at any rate, involves a consciousness of the divine,<sup>1</sup> then it is impossible to exclude speculation on the nature of the divine from the philosophy of religion, and the distinction between the Greek philosophers and the moderns in this respect is merely an illustration of the difference, to which I have already adverted, between what we may call the objective attitude of ancient

<sup>1</sup> There may be objections to saying that it is a consciousness of the divine, if by this we are to be understood as making it merely cognition but at any rate it involves a consciousness of the divine.



philosophy in general and the subjective attitude of the philosophy whose historical starting-point is the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum*. Thus we might as well deny the discussion of the nature of being by the ancients to be philosophy at all as deny their discussion of the nature of the gods to be philosophy of religion. It is, as I have already hinted, the more remarkable that Professor Pfleiderer should take this line, since, when he comes to deal with post-Kantian speculation, he constantly insists—and in my judgement quite rightly—on the erroneousness of that way of thinking which results from abandoning oneself to be led by the subjective tendency in modern philosophy as far as it will take us, the way of thinking for which religion is a purely subjective experience, in other words an illusion, to which, despite its incurable habit of speaking as though it involved consciousness of an independent object, no such independent object really corresponds. With this subjectivist tendency in any of its more extreme manifestations, in Feuerbach or in Lange or among theologians of the school of Ritschl, Professor Pfleiderer has but little sympathy, and we are therefore surprised to find him denying to ancient speculations on the nature of the divine, because they take this form rather than that of the analysis of a state of our minds, a claim to rank as philosophy of religion in the same class to which belong the religious speculations of Spinoza, of Kant, and of Hegel.

In taking this line Professor Pfleiderer is perhaps overmuch influenced by the fact that 'Religion' is a word denoting not a certain kind of object but rather a certain kind of consciousness or experience. On this matter I have enlarged elsewhere<sup>1</sup> and so shall not dwell upon it here. I will only make two observations. Firstly, it is impossible for a philosopher to separate the consideration of a kind of object from that of the consciousness or experience through which and in

<sup>1</sup> *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 7 ff.

which alone it *is* an object to us ; and even more obviously impossible for any one to separate the consideration of a kind of consciousness or experience from that of the object in reference to which alone it *is* that kind of consciousness or experience. Secondly, while (as I have elsewhere contended<sup>1</sup>) it is worthy of observation that we speak of Religion and the object of Religion, but on the other hand of Beauty and the consciousness of Beauty, the ultimate explanation of this difference is not (as is sometimes thought) that Religion is a kind of behaviour or a kind of feeling and not really the apprehension of a kind of object at all ; it is rather that Religion is a real presence of the object in the mind and heart of the religious person ; so that here the very apprehension of the object is in the last resort regarded as a manifestation of the object's own activity. Nor do I think that Professor Pfeiderer would differ from me here. But it is said that in antiquity Religion was not yet (to quote Professor Pfeiderer again) ' presented in experience as a fact by itself clearly distinguished from the other phases of social and especially of civil life. . . . With Christianity, religion for the first time appeared as an independent fact, clearly distinguished alike from politics, art, and science.' Now, whether it can be said without any qualification that it was for the first time in Christianity that Religion appeared as an independent fact I do not feel certain ; but no doubt if we are thinking, as Professor Pfeiderer here is in the main thinking, only of the development of the higher European culture, it is true that in Christianity the religious interest was differentiated from the civil as it was not in classical antiquity. But important and pregnant in consequences as is this distinction between the position of Religion in antiquity and its position in modern times, I do not see that it renders it impossible to regard ancient speculation as contributing nothing to

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., *ibid.*

the philosophy of religion. One would not deny that the ancients had a political philosophy because they had not fully recognized the distinctness of politics from religion: yet the conception formed of politics, no less than that formed of religion, is affected by the establishment of a distinction between Church and State in which Comte<sup>1</sup> saw the guarantee of intellectual liberty and Lord Acton<sup>2</sup> that of civil liberty. In these judgements of Comte and Lord Acton<sup>3</sup> one would not be surprised to find Professor Pfleiderer scenting the influence of Roman Catholicism, a system at which he can never resist the temptation in season and out of season to cast a taunt. He himself recognizes, however, elsewhere<sup>4</sup> the importance of the distinction of Church and State as characteristic of Christianity in contrast with the religions of classical antiquity; and we are entitled to point out that, as I have just said, the recognition of distinction between political and religious spheres no less affects the conception of politics than it does the conception of religion. The modern conception of a secular civil life differs from the ancient conception of a civil life of which religion forms an ever-present feature just as the modern conception of a religion which is no way imposed by political considerations, and in which one need not be at one with one's fellow citizens, but may be at one with the citizens of another State, differs from the ancient conception of religion as an expression of our consciousness of political unity with our fellow tribesmen or fellow citizens. It is true that the two greatest of the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle both, though in somewhat different ways, connected their own philosophical religion so little with the traditional cultus of their people that their civil 'theology' (to use the phrase we quoted before from Varro)

<sup>1</sup> *Pos. Philos.*, tr. Martineau, ii. 217 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Freedom and other Essays*, 1907, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. also that of Lacordaire, *Conférences de Notre-Dame*, i, p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> iv. 205 ff.

seems scarcely to us to have to do with religion at all, but with something which we should rather call the ceremonial side of civil life. Still, just so far as this was so, they had already anticipated that very severance of religion from civil life for which, according to Professor Pfleiderer, the world had to wait till the appearance of Christianity.

I cannot therefore think that Professor Pfleiderer is justified in refusing to see in the theology of the ancient Greek philosophers something which is not of a piece with the philosophy of religion to be found in Spinoza and his successors, although, no doubt, there is a difference between the attitude of the Greeks and the attitude of the moderns toward these as toward all philosophical problems. But, according to Professor Pfleiderer, not only are we not to look for philosophy of religion in the speculations of the Greek philosophers, we are not to look for it at once even after Christianity has 'presented Religion in experience as a fact by itself', for we are not to look for it in the Fathers and Schoolmen. Not that, like the Greek philosophers, they knew not Religion 'as an independent fact', but that they knew not Philosophy. 'Their thinking', says Professor Pfleiderer, 'was never an independent scientific investigation, but was throughout, though in different degrees, dominated by presuppositions furnished in the faith of the Church.' Professor Pfleiderer is here calling attention to a certain distinction between mediaeval and modern thinking—their different attitude towards authority—which is in itself of great interest and importance. But the distinction is, if I am not very much mistaken, given an altogether excessive importance, when it is made to be a distinction between Philosophy of Religion and something to which that designation cannot be applied at all. And I am bound to add that there is a certain irony in the fact that what I cannot but regard as an error of Professor Pfleiderer's is due in fact to precisely the same defect in himself as he detects in the

Fathers and the Schoolmen ; it is that in his whole view of the history of the philosophy of religion he is 'dominated by presuppositions furnished in the faith of' his own 'Church' and can never bring himself to speak of any view which he considers to be 'un-Protestant' without marks of exclamation expressive of astonished contempt.

Although, no doubt, it is true in general that mediaeval thinkers did not permit themselves complete freedom in their criticism of Church authority—or, in the case of the Schoolmen, of Aristotelian authority either—this does not mark them off so decisively from others as Professor Pfeiderer supposes. The history of the subsequent philosophy of religion which he has related himself is full of the assumption in various degrees by thinkers to whose thinking he does not deny the name of Philosophy of Religion of principles furnished by their religious tradition : and he himself, as we have seen, is not exempt from it. Would Professor Pfeiderer deny (we cannot but ask) the name of political philosophy to the thought of Aristotle because it was not independent of presuppositions furnished by the structure of the Hellenic State? As a matter of fact, while on the one hand the constant reference to authority in the mediaeval writers is often in practice combined with freer thinking than their traditional manner of exposition suggests, the fact that a writer honestly believes himself not to be deferring to authority by no means always implies that he is not actually doing so. This may be illustrated from the case of the writer who is often said to be the first writer on Natural Theology as a science by itself (because he first, so far as I know, gave this title to a book)—Raymond of Sebonde. He is probably now most widely known as the subject of Montaigne's famous 'Apology'—from which (as I said before<sup>1</sup>) one does not obtain much information about

<sup>1</sup> p. 18.



the actual teaching of Raymond himself. Now Raymond of Sebonde's treatment of theology really differs from that of other Schoolmen chiefly in the absence of reference to authorities who are in fact no less authorities to him than to the others. It is true that his style gains by the disappearance of the express quotations from Aristotle and the Scriptures which characterized the scholastic method of presentation, and the superior literary grace thus gained seems to have been on the whole what Montaigne best liked in him. Moreover, if we look somewhat more closely than Professor Pfeiderer has done into the nature of the mediaeval thinkers' use of Church dogma, one must remember that, while it no doubt sometimes implied an attitude towards authority which it is impossible for us to approve (though we may easily adopt it without being fully conscious that we are doing so), it is sometimes only the expression of a reference, indispensable for any philosophy of religion which is not a mere abstract and external rationalism, to the actual religious experience possessed by the thinker himself, either as an individual or as a member of a religious community. Professor Pfeiderer is himself, both in theory and practice, as far as possible removed from the kind of rationalism which would rule out a reference of this kind from the Philosophy of Religion.

Professor Pfeiderer has of course a perfect right to begin his history of the Philosophy of Religion where he will ; and the inauguration of modern philosophy by Descartes is a real epoch at which a beginning may quite intelligibly be made ; but it seems to me strange to say that the Philosophy of Religion had no history before—nor do the reasons given by Professor Pfeiderer seem to justify the statement.

But although Professor Pfeiderer's view that ' Philosophy of Religion ' does not exist before the epoch made by the

appearance of the Cartesian philosophy is stated in a form which greatly exaggerates the difference between speculation on the objects of religion before and after that time, yet, as we have admitted, it results from the objective attitude, characteristic of the thought of the ancient and mediaeval periods of European philosophy, that the problems raised by the religious experience were presented in these periods in a somewhat different form from that to which we have become accustomed in modern times. Moreover, there is another respect in which the problems that particularly belong to Natural Theology, as the Founder of this Lecture conceives it, are differently approached among the ancients and among ourselves. To the ancient philosophers the belief in the actual divinity of certain natural objects, and especially of the sun and moon, was a living belief among their countrymen and in some cases a belief from the influence of which they themselves were by no means free. It was something with which they felt themselves bound to come to terms, just as modern philosophers have often felt themselves bound, not only in view of the opinions of their countrymen but of their own religious experience, to come to terms with the belief in the divinity of Christ. When in modern times Goethe (in a conversation reported by Eckermann<sup>1</sup>), after expressing his readiness to worship Christ, adds that it is equally in accordance with his natural bent to worship the sun, we seem to be at once transported into the atmosphere of mere fancy. However Christ may have been to Goethe himself only a symbol of the divinity of human nature, we know, as Goethe knew, of hosts of fellow countrymen and contemporaries who are in earnest with the belief in the divinity of that one historical individual person, and are as far as possible from re-

<sup>1</sup> Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, iii, pp. 255, 256, ed. 1868; cp. Pfeleiderer, Eng. tr., i. 256.

garding him merely as one towards whom we happen to be favourably situated for recognizing in him a divinity which is just as much present in others, only to us less obviously so. On the other hand, in regard to the sun no educated person doubts that, though it is the only primary star which is near enough to our globe to be to us the splendid and beneficent thing that other stars may well be to other living beings, yet that it does not thus in reality, or for our thought as scientific astronomers, form a class by itself apart from the other primary stars ; nor, I suppose, do we think that divinity could reasonably be predicated of any star except as sharing in the divinity of nature as a whole. But in antiquity the divinity of the sun was as living a belief as the divinity of Christ in modern times, and this could not but make the manner in which the ancients approached the problems of Natural Theology different from that in which the moderns approach them. In mediæval times the divinity of the sun, moon, and stars was no longer a living faith ; but the general scheme of the Aristotelian cosmology was preserved as part of the authoritative scientific and philosophical tradition, which Copernicus and Galileo had not yet disturbed. Hence we find ourselves in presence of a transitional condition of things, which may be illustrated by the identification of the Aristotelian sphere-spirits with the angelic orders of the false Areopagite's ' celestial hierarchy ', an identification which forms an essential feature of the view of the world adopted in Dante's *Divina Commedia*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The notion of the angelic nature of the sphere-moving intelligences is older than Dante, but the elaboration of an exact correspondence between the celestial spheres and the Celestial Hierarchy of the false Dionysius seems to be due to the poet himself. His usual authority in such matters, St. Thomas, ascribes all the heavenly motions to the angelic orders of Virtues only, following the text in St. Luke's Gospel about the powers of the heavens, ' virtutes caelorum ' (Luke xxi. 26 ; see *Summa contra Gentiles*, iii. 80), the shaking of which is to be a sign of the end of the world. This interpretation of the text in St. Luke comes from St. Bernard, *de*

The problems which particularly belong to Natural Theology I take to be those which, as looked at from one side, we may describe as concerning the relation of our religious experience to that kind of experience which, beginning with sense perception, is, by the use of those synthetic principles which Kant called categories, elaborated into what we have in the natural sciences ; or, looked at from the other side, as concerning the relation of the divine nature to the sensible phenomena of nature and the forces and laws whose existence and validity we infer from these. In saying this I assume the existence of a religious experience ; or, to express the same assumption otherwise, and, in my judgement, more properly, the existence of a divine nature ; and this I conceive we are entitled to do. Even those who deny that there is any reality answering to this name, or any *experience* properly so called which is religious, since they regard what is so called as illusory and not as the experience of a real object at all, will at least admit that, when men have arrived at a stage at which we can talk of their possessing a Natural Theology, they already possess religion, and are familiar with behaviour of the sort which we call by that name. They are familiar, that is to say, with the propitiation and worship of supposed supernatural beings ; and already possess the idea of God or of a divine nature, however it may have been acquired. For myself I have elsewhere<sup>1</sup> attempted to show that neither the existence of the religious experience nor of an

*Consid.* v. 4, § 8. (Cp. Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, p. 129.) See also Roger Bacon, *Comm. Nat.* I, ed. Steele, pp. 235-6: 'Per motus celorum qui non sunt uaturales nec violenti sed uoluntarii scimus quod angelica natura est que mouet celos ; et quia sunt sexaginta motus secundum Aristotelem in xi<sup>o</sup> Metaphisice, scimus quod angeli motores orbium celestium sunt lx preter milia milium et decies centena milia et innumerabiles nobis, quos scimus esse per fidem ecclesie et scripture et sanctorum.' Cp. also St. Thomas, *Summa c. Gentiles*, ii. 92, where he argues that you can disprove Aristotle's limitation by natural arguments as well as by Scriptural authority.

<sup>1</sup> *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 3.

object thereof requires or even admits of a preliminary proof.

I turn back now to the passage in Augustine *de Civitate Dei* in which Varro is quoted as distinguishing three kinds of theology and among them one which he calls Natural. It will serve our turn as an introduction to the natural theology of the ancients. 'They call', Augustine quotes Varro as saying—probably, as we saw, with reference to Panaetius, certainly to some Greek, and almost certainly to some Stoical writer—'they call one kind of theology fabulous, *mythicon*, and this is used chiefly by poets; another natural, *physicon*, and this used chiefly by philosophers; another civil, *civile*' (he translates and does not merely transliterate the Greek word), 'and this is what the people in the various countries use.'<sup>1</sup> 'As to the first of the three I have mentioned,' so he continues, 'there are in it many inventions which are inconsistent with the dignity and the true nature of the Immortals. Such are the tales that one god was born from a head'—like Pallas Athene—'another from a thigh'—like Dionysus—'another from drops of blood'—as the Giants and the Melian nymphs in Hesiod—'that gods have been thieves'—like Hermes—'and adulterers'—like Zeus—'and have been the slaves of men'—as Apollo of Admetus. 'In a word, herein is attributed to the gods everything which might be attributed not only to mankind, but to the most degraded of mankind.' So much for Varro's view of the fabulous kind of theology. Augustine goes on to quote his judgement of the natural. 'The second kind is that', he says, 'on which the philosophers have left us many books, wherein they discuss the origin, dwelling-place, nature, and character of the gods: whether they came into being in time or have existed from all eternity: whether they are derived from fire, as Heraclitus

<sup>1</sup> 'Mythicon appellant quo maxime utuntur poetae, physicon quo philosophi, civile quo populi.'



believes, or from numbers, as Pythagoras holds, or from atoms, as Epicurus supposes; and so on with other theories, the discussion of which is more easily tolerated within the walls of a lecture-room than out of doors in public.’<sup>1</sup> Lastly, this, as Augustine tells us, is Varro’s account of the third kind of theology. ‘The third sort is that which it is the duty of the citizens in states, and especially of those who are priests, to know and to put in practice. From this we learn what gods are to receive public worship and from whom; what sacrifices and what other rites are to be performed and by whom. The first sort of theology’, he concludes, ‘is best adapted to the drama (*ad theatrum*), the second to the nature of things (*ad mundum*), the third to the State (*ad urbem*).’ That is, if one is composing a play one should use the first; if explaining the nature of the world, the second; if performing public functions, the third. This triple division is no doubt, as I have already said, of Stoical origin; it reappears in the *Placita Philosophorum* which are printed among the works of Plutarch, and was probably in the *Vetusta* or Posidonian *Placita*. There however, the mythical and civil kinds are placed next to one another in what seems to us a more obvious order than that adopted by Varro. His, however, was appropriate to his immediate purpose, which was to set forth the Roman traditions respecting the gods. The *civile genus theologiae* under which these fall is therefore placed last; immediately before it the kind to which he had no objection to make except that it was unsuitable for exoteric teaching, and under the head of which any theories which he personally entertained respecting the divinity would doubtless fall; while the *mythicon genus* comes first, to be dismissed with contempt. As has been already pointed out, this was a natural attitude for a Roman writer, since the imported

<sup>1</sup> ‘Quae facilius intra parietes in schola quam extra in foro ferre possunt aures.’

Greek mythology had little to do with the established cult, which could thus safely be respected while the other was ridiculed. The distinction between the two had arisen among the Greek philosophers ; for among the Greeks, too, the existence of a great national literature had given to the mythological lore *quo maxime usi sunt poetae* a considerable independence of the cult, which not only was rather locally various than national, but also often remained, so to speak, at a lower level of civilization. And even for the Greek philosophers there was a motive for respecting the established ritual in their desire to encourage everywhere, even among the uncultivated, a religious spirit, and to rank themselves on the side of all who earnestly worshipped the divine power in any form ; while with respect to the sanction given among educated men by Homer and the other poets to mean conceptions of the divine nature they held themselves to be serving the cause of true religion in insisting, after the example of Plato, upon the poverty and perversity of the ideals thus suggested.

It has already been pointed out that the relation of Natural Theology in the Stoical view which Varro reports to the mythical and civil was a *superior* one. For the mythical and civil theology did not, as involving a *supernatural* revelation, contain truths which transcended any contained in the Natural Theology. On the contrary, the natural theology contained in the more objective form of scientific speculation what was only imaginatively or dramatically represented in the mythology and ritual. In coming to know more about natural phenomena, about the stars and the elements, they were coming to know more properly about the beings which had all along been regarded as divine.

Though, no doubt, the later philosophical allegorizers of the religious tradition assigned what they called 'physical' or 'natural' explanations to stories and customs to which

in the light of the recent investigation of primitive custom and myth we should assign a different origin, yet it will be admitted that some or even many of the stories in the ancient mythologies were from the first intended to describe or explain the principal celestial or elemental phenomena, and that much of the ritual handed down from primitive time had from the first as its object the promotion of natural processes in which man is interested, whether directly through what we call magic, or indirectly through the favour of anthropomorphic beings who were supposed to control these processes. As in the heyday of modern Natural Theology during the *Saeculum Rationalisticum*, so in antiquity also, preoccupation with Natural Theology under that name is a symptom of rationalistic detachment from the religious life of the people ; but the fact that the popular religion of antiquity was to a great extent a nature-religion led to the result that just because the ancient Natural Theology differed less widely in its content from the popular religion, it could pursue a more completely independent course than the modern, where the popular religion contained elements for which the Natural Theology could less easily provide equivalents. Nor must it be forgotten that the presence in Christendom of powerful ecclesiastical organizations, to which classical antiquity presents nothing corresponding, also contributed to modify the relations which had previously existed between philosophical speculation on religious matters and the established religious tradition. We have now, perhaps, obtained a view of the scope of the ancient Natural Theology in general, and may pass to the discussion of a point the examination of which will form a natural transition from the general considerations with which we have hitherto been dealing to a more special study of the Natural Theology of Plato. I mean the question of anthropomorphism, in connexion with the celebrated attack on the anthropomorphic mytho-

logy of Homer and Hesiod by Xenophanes of Colophon, in the interest of what may be called a Natural Theology, the doctrine of one God 'who without toil swayeth all things by the thought of his mind'. If Professor Burnet<sup>1</sup> is right, we should regard Xenophanes as having been neither a philosopher nor a theologian properly so called, but rather a satirist whose special object of attack was the anthropomorphic mythology of Homer and Hesiod. It is a well-known observation of Herodotus that Homer and Hesiod were the authors of the Greek theology—'it was they that taught the Greeks how the gods came into being, that gave the gods their titles and distributed among them the honours to be paid them, and the arts to be placed under their patronage, and also appointed the forms under which they were worshipped'.<sup>2</sup> This passage, as Dr. Farnell says in his work on the *Cults of the Greek States*,<sup>3</sup> 'somewhat exaggerates their influence'. But the importance assigned by Plato in the *Republic* to the theological quarrel between philosophy and poetry indicates that their influence was great. And the peculiar character of this quarrel is indicated by Plato's proposal, if poets should present themselves, who, like Homer, shall not shrink from representing gods and heroes as falling below the true standard of virtuous manhood, to crown them with garlands and anoint them with precious balms, but straightway dismiss them, though with all honour, from the ideal State. It was not possible to treat the literary mythology with mere contempt, nor to take up towards it the purely ironical attitude expressed towards the traditional ritual in such a passage as that in which Plato,<sup>4</sup> having condemned the Hesiodic legend of Cronos's mutilation of his father Uranus, adds 'that if in any case such things must be told' (that is, as part of the ritual of some act of worship) 'we must ordain that some

<sup>1</sup> *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed., pp. 124 ff.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 53.

<sup>3</sup> i. 10 n.

<sup>4</sup> *Rep.* ii. 378 A.

huge and unprocurable victim must first be offered, so that as few as possible may hear them'—a passage which shows how little it was expected at that time that the traditional customs of worship should conform to what was nevertheless recognized as the higher standard of morality. Nor could the literary mythology be dismissed with the uncompromising indignation bestowed by Plato on the baser sort of Orphicism, represented by the itinerant pardoners who pretend for a trifling fee to procure immunity for sin by the performance of propitiatory ceremonies. As to Orphicism in its higher forms, Plato no doubt owed a good deal to its suggestions in respect of his doctrine of the Soul. This Orphicism, we may here observe, probably came nearer than anything else that entered into the thoughts of Greek thinkers to the 'revealed' theology of later times—upon which indeed it no doubt exercised no small influence. The most obvious difference between them lies in the fact that its content did not include the truly historical element which enters into the later revealed theology. We may say the same of Mithraism, which was actually a rival of Christianity in the strife for religious supremacy in the Roman Empire during the third century of our era. The divine Saviour of Mithraism was unquestionably a mythical, while the divine Saviour of the Christians was unquestionably an historical, personage. It is noticeable that the attempt made nowadays by some scholars (for example in this country by Mr. Thomas Whittaker) to see in 'revealed religion' nothing but the same old Oriental doctrine as invaded Greece under the name of Orphicism, quite naturally goes with a denial of any historical truth to the evangelical records of the foundation of Christianity. But this by the way. With reference to the influence of Orphicism on Plato, however, perhaps something further may be said. I am conscious here of speaking without having studied the evidence of such influence sufficiently to warrant me in



making more than some very general observations. Quite recently the first essay in Professor Taylor's *Varia Socratica*—that on the 'Impiety of Socrates'—and a more balanced statement of the same thesis in the introduction to Professor Burnet's edition of Plato's *Phaedo*, have called attention to the evidence which exists for attributing to Socrates a very close connexion with circles in which the doctrines of Orphicism respecting the divinity, pre-existence, and immortality of the soul were held and a very considerable measure of assent to those doctrines themselves. This evidence I do not now propose to discuss. As no writings were left by Socrates himself, it is necessarily gathered from those of others, and the question of its value depends upon the estimate we form of the respective credibility of the writers on whom we depend for our knowledge of Plato's master. But it will not be denied that some influence, whether coming through Socrates or not, was exerted by the Orphic doctrine of the soul upon Plato, and that it supplied much of the material of his myths. Moreover, as we have seen, it is true that Orphicism in certain respects corresponded more closely than anything else in classical antiquity to what later ages called 'revealed religion'. It was taught on what purported to be the authority of a half-divine hero who had in person visited the world beyond the grave; and again, like the later 'revealed religion', it was not a State religion, and this was the ground of the ill repute which—whether or no it was (as Professor Taylor argues<sup>1</sup>) what really occasioned the charge made against Socrates of introducing new divinities, *καὶνὰ δαιμόνια*—it probably enjoyed in conservative circles at Athens. Yet I suspect that we should be misled if we were to think that it was to Plato 'revelation' in the sense that it took

<sup>1</sup> *Varia Socratica*, Essay I. See the criticism by Mr. A. S. Ferguson in the *Classical Quarterly* for July 1913. (See also Prof. Burnet's *Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato*, which had not appeared when these pages were written.)

for him in any way precedence of philosophical thought. It very likely, directly or indirectly, suggested to him conceptions, it almost certainly suggested the form in which he presented conceptions, which yet he only received into his philosophy because they were, or so far as they were, established by free speculation.

The influence of Orphicism is, I suppose, as I have already said, most perceptible in the case of the myths. What is the function of the Platonic myths? They are not, I imagine, intended to express in a figure truths which in his view transcended reason, but rather to answer questions which reason or philosophy could not answer, because they deal with what is *not* eternal truth and so is not the concern of philosophy. What is the origin or destiny of the world, of society, of the soul? Such questions about what *was* or *will* be, not about what eternally *is*, can only be answered by way of a story. Where experience or record is wanting to tell us what actually happened we may invent something 'likely',<sup>1</sup> something that will not conflict with our convictions, reached by reason, concerning what is eternally real. Thus we may tell tales of the deeds of the gods, but not such tales as imply that with the divine nature there is 'variableness or shadow of turning'.<sup>2</sup> As to the future, philosophy does not prophesy; but we may avail ourselves of such an eschatology as the Orphic so far as it is in accordance with the eternal and immutable principles of justice. It is quite possible that Plato may have thought that the Orphic eschatology gave the best answers that could be given to some questions of this class. It is even quite possible, not to say probable, that he really 'believed in' the transmigration of souls. For just as, though philosophy cannot answer the question what happened to me last year, yet there is a true answer to this

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Tim.* 29 c.

<sup>2</sup> James i. 17; for Plato's views on stories about the gods see *Rep.* ii. 377 D ff.

question, and something will happen to me to-morrow, this and not that, although of this too philosophy cannot prophesy what it will be ; so to the question what will happen to my soul after death, or to the question whence it came when I was born, there must be true answers, though it does not lie in the power of philosophy to supply them. And Plato may thus have *believed* in the transmigration of souls. No doubt he did not believe in the details of the myth of Er, any more than Dante, while doubtless believing in a general way in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, believed in the geography of the *Divina Commedia*. He may also have *believed* in ἀνάμνησις, although the *philosophical* importance of the latter doctrine, for example, lay, as Plato himself says,<sup>1</sup> not in the explanation that the soul had been conversant with the Ideas in a previous life, but in the present fact that when we learn, we *recognize* ; we say ‘ Yes, *that* is right ’, though we never thought on the matter before, any more than Meno’s slave-boy had been taught geometry before his meeting with Socrates. In like manner the philosophical importance of the myth of Er lies in the eternal significance of the distinction between the right choice and wrong, not in the doctrine that we shall have to make such a choice in the future and bear its consequences in another period of earthly existence. No doubt we find an application of Orphic language, as in the *Phaedo*<sup>2</sup> of the line νερθηκόφοροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι, ‘ Many are the wand-bearers but few the adepts ’, to the many that live a life of outward goodness without φρόνησις, or, as it is put in the *Republic*,<sup>3</sup> ‘ without philosophy ’, and the few οἱ πεφιλοσόφηκότες ὁρθῶς whose virtue is founded on the rock of a genuine knowledge of the Good. But this is quite a different thing from regarding participation in mysteries as itself the passport to heaven. We know how far Plato was from anything of

<sup>1</sup> *Meno*, 86 B.<sup>2</sup> 69 C.<sup>3</sup> x. 619 C.

that sort from the language, to which I have already referred, in which he speaks in the *Republic* of the itinerant pardoners who promise for a money payment to take away sin by ceremonies. In the use of Orphic phrases he only, as the Scholiast Olympiodorus truly said, παρωδεῖ ἔπος Ὀρφικόν, using the words of Orpheus in a quite different sense from that in which they were primarily intended.

When we pass from Plato to Aristotle we should be going too far to deny any historical connexion between Orphicism and his teaching, since, in the view of some scholars with a right to speak, the doctrine of the divine nature of the human soul, or (as in Aristotle at least) of a part of the human soul, was made current among the Greeks by Orphicism, and this doctrine is certainly taught by Aristotle. But if we should be, as I think, wrong in supposing Plato to regard this as a truth above reason, resting on the authority of revelation—although he may sometimes play with expressions which suggest this—to the mind of Aristotle the whole notion of such a ‘revelation’ and the interest in the future destiny of the individual, which I think it hard to deny that Plato felt, seem to have been alien.

This digression about Orphicism in Plato is perhaps not to be considered a mere digression—though I fear I have had nothing to say in it which is not of an obvious and somewhat superficial character—since, if we are trying to understand the difference between the Natural Theology of the ancients and that of the moderns, a difference partly due to the different position of what may be called Positive Religion in the two periods, we cannot dispense with attending to a kind of religion which was certainly more nearly akin to what was meant in later times by revealed religion than were either the State religions or those theories of philosophers about the gods which constitute Varro’s *genus physicon theologiae*. It is, however, important not to ignore the distinction, to which I have already adverted, between

the Orphic 'revelation', which had nothing about it more genuinely *historical* than had the mythology of Homer and Hesiod, and one with the historical credentials of the Christian. But for the present I return to the consideration of this mythology of the poets, the *genus mythicon theologiae* of Varro, under the head of which will, of course, fall the stories told of the gods in the writings which passed under the name of Orpheus, no less than the stories told in those which passed under the names of Homer and of Hesiod.

The literary mythology of which Homer and Hesiod were the great sources stood in a peculiar relation to the theology of the philosophers in that it could be treated neither with contempt nor yet with sympathy. As a work of the poetical imagination it is of course among the most precious gifts of the Greek spirit to the world ; but, as it seemed to Plato no less than to Xenophanes, it tended to exercise a pernicious influence both on Science and on Religion. No other nation, I suppose, had quite the same problem to deal with, because with no other had mythology been made the instrument of so potent an imagination. The Indian mythology was luxuriant enough, but its very extravagance made it less anthropomorphic. The prophets of Israel, in their desire to exalt Jahveh and to show that his ways were not as ours, nor his thoughts as our thoughts, had left 'no gods beside him', so that there was no divine society whose doings could form the subject-matter of a mythology like that of the Greeks. What legendary lore was related was related of angels or of patriarchs, not of gods ; and even the divine intervention therein came to be assigned not to Jahveh himself, but to his 'angel', his 'glory', his 'word', a being whose personality could yet not be further imaginatively developed in distinction from Jahveh's, for fear of encroaching on the unity of God which had become the fundamental article of Jewish religion. In Roman religion, again, the gods seem never to have



attained to a fully anthropomorphic character at all before the introduction of the Greek mythology.<sup>1</sup> There was nothing one could call a native *chronique* of their doings and therefore no *chronique scandaleuse*. The *chronique* of the Greek gods, on the other hand, as related in the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems was truly *scandaleuse*; and not only so, but as related in the Orphic poems too—indeed, in the opinion of Origen,<sup>3</sup> Orpheus was worse than Homer in his treatment of the moral character of the gods. The naïve stories of primitive mythology had been so far purged of the merely grotesque and monstrous—the beings of whom they were told were so thoroughly realized in imagination, in plastic and poetic art, as glorified men and women—that the standards of life implied in their mythology could come into direct competition with those of the philosophers, just as the genius of Wagner in our own time has sometimes enabled those of the Germanic mythology to do with those of our religious teachers. Now these facts led to a position which needs careful defining. On the one hand Plato, than whom no philosopher showed himself more severe towards the literary mythology, was most earnest in denying to the divine nature any share in human weakness and passion; on the other hand he was no less in earnest in tracing in the world-order a Mind and Reason,<sup>4</sup> the archetype and source of the mind and reason which is in man. Thus he is in natural theology the opponent of one sort of anthropomorphism, while he is the champion of another. He tells us<sup>5</sup> of his master Socrates' disappointment with Anaxagoras in that he found the essence or primary nature of things not in any material element like water or air or fire, but in Mind, and yet in detail resorted to a mechanical, not a teleological explanation

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Pfeiderer, iv. 230 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Contra Cels.* vii. 54, quoted by Lobeck in his *Aglaophamus*, p. 603.

<sup>4</sup> *Philebus*, 30 D.

<sup>5</sup> *Phaedo*, 97 B ff.

of what takes place in nature. This attitude is made possible for him by his opposition to one another of Reason and Sense, by means of which he can see in the world the manifestation of a manlike Reason, while yet he will have nothing to say to an ascription to the Divinity of human feelings and passions. And as Reason is the principle of unity, Sense of diversity, this makes him in principle a monotheist in opposition to the polytheism of the mythologists, though, for reasons which become apparent on a closer study of his philosophy, this is not a point upon which he is specially concerned directly to insist.

In Xenophanes we are, of course, in presence of a much less advanced stage of criticism. The satirist of Colophon is a critic of the anthropomorphic theology of the poets without any thought of the higher anthropomorphism of which Socrates and Plato found the first suggestion in Anaxagoras. He thinks lions would image the gods as lions, oxen as oxen, horses as horses. In other words, he does not distinguish Reason in man as what is godlike in him, and also as something which we have no ground for supposing the beasts to share with him. Man in his view supposes himself to be in God's image not merely as Reason but as an animal of a particular shape. Doubtless this supposition is made both in ancient and in modern times by simple people; it is also true that, when on reflection discontent with this supposition arises, it is often, as by Xenophanes, carried out in an indiscriminating fashion. Yet it is noteworthy that, no doubt without fully realizing that it was a qualification of his attack on anthropomorphism, Xenophanes attributes thought to his one God, who is none of the objects of perception—not even the Sun, which he seems to have thought a temporary phenomenon, every day's sun being a new one—but the whole *ὄψανός*; for he speaks of this one God's *φροντίς* and even of his senses; though 'neither in form like unto mortals nor in thought', yet 'he sees all over, thinks all over, and hears all over'.

All through the history of Natural Theology we find something of this alternation between a reaction against an Anthropomorphism which degrades the divine nature and a reaction against a Naturalism which degrades it yet more by assimilating it to that which is not possessed, as man is, of consciousness, reason, and purpose. In Greece, however, as we have already observed, there was a sufficiently strong tradition in popular belief in favour of ascribing divinity to the sun and moon, conceived of as exalted living beings and yet not definitely anthropomorphic, to influence Plato and Aristotle (not to speak of later philosophers, by whose time Oriental sun and star worship had begun to tell) in the direction of not only recognizing in the order of the world the manifestation of one divine Reason, but also of acknowledging a special divinity manifested in the regular movements of each heavenly sphere; a circumstance which may fairly be said to have checked the advance to a genuine monotheism along the lines of Greek philosophy. Dr. Farnell's proofs,<sup>1</sup> which go to show that the worship of the sun and moon did not enter as such very largely into the State religions of Greece, are not really inconsistent with what has just been stated. The very fact which he cites Aristophanes<sup>2</sup> as mentioning, that while the barbarians adored the sun and the moon, the Greeks preferred anthropomorphic gods like Hermes, made the worship of the sun and moon as such, which Dr. Farnell of course does not deny to have existed, freer from the evil associations of the poetical mythology than that of the gods more especially connected with the various states, just because they were not to the same extent anthropomorphically conceived. At the same time the fact that this worship was current everywhere, among Barbarians as well as Greeks, suggested that it belonged, as Plato and Aristotle regard it as belonging, to universal or natural religion as

<sup>1</sup> *Cults of the Greek States*, v. 417 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Pax*, 410; see Farnell, *op. cit.*, v. 418.

opposed to the civil religion of a particular state or nation. Dr. Farnell observes that the Greeks of the classical period did not worship the stars, and so were saved from the superstitions connected with astrology. He does not allude to the expressions of Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> which are difficult to reconcile with such worship being as unfamiliar to his readers as Dr. Farnell's unqualified statement would suggest. But, no doubt, while the stars were regarded as divine, they were yet not the object of a regular public cult, nor does there seem to be any evidence that they were the objects of a private cult either; and for that very reason, like the worship of the more conspicuous luminaries the veneration for them, was less tainted with what to the philosophers were low associations, and was thus readily regarded by them as a part of Natural Religion; of the religion, that is, which is at once common to all men and approved by the reason which is common to all men—which is, in other words, universal and rational. The union of these Hellenic traditions with the sun-worship of Oriental 'barbarians' in the time of the Roman Emperors and the expression of this union in the advance of Mithraism came within a little of making the latter the religion of the Empire. The contact and conflict of Mithraism with Christianity, a religion at once so like and so unlike, and its final defeat by the latter, belong, of course, to a much later period. I only mention these matters here to indicate the importance for the history of natural theology of the recognition of a special divinity in the heavenly bodies. The worship of these could plausibly be regarded as a pre-eminently 'natural' religion in contrast with one which, like Christianity, involved the recognition of a special divinity in transactions performed not, like the movements of the sun, moon, and stars, in the presence of all mankind, but only before a few people of one nation in a corner of the inhabited earth.

<sup>1</sup> *Met.* A 8.

## THE NATURAL THEOLOGY OF PLATO

I PROPOSE in the following section of this book to offer some observations on the account of Natural Theology contained in the tenth book of Plato's *Laws*. Plato in the *Laws*, and particularly in this part of them, is dealing with just what we usually have in view when we speak of Natural Theology. He is not speaking either of a higher philosophical knowledge of God such as the Guardians of the State in his *Republic* enjoy, but from which those without the education that he there outlines must be excluded ; or of the particular traditions cherished in particular places or by particular communities. The notion of Revealed Theology in the phraseology of later times corresponds in part to the latter, in part to the former of these. It was considered as resting on a particular historical tradition preserved in a particular community ; and it was conceived to impart a direct if imperfect knowledge of the ultimate Godhead. The passage of Plato's *Laws* which we are now to consider is concerned with the religion common to all men : but, as we shall see, it is not described by Plato as rising above a recognition of the divinity of beings, who, however exalted his conception of them, and of the degree in which they manifested the nature of the Good, were certainly not to him the Highest of all. Let me first set forth the main outline of what we find here ; we shall find ourselves already moving among thoughts and arguments which were destined to play a large part in later discussions of the subject.

Plato is concerned to combat three mischievous views : the first the view that there are no gods ; the second that there are gods, but that they take no care for man ; the



third that they take care for men, but are easily persuaded by sacrifice.

In opposition to these three false doctrines he is prepared to maintain the existence, providence, and incorruptibility of the gods. The first of these points, the existence of the gods, he proves by two arguments, that from the order of the heavens, and that from the *consensus gentium*, the agreement of all races of men in the acknowledgement that there are gods. Speaking in the person of the Athenian Stranger, who is the chief interlocutor in this Dialogue, wherein Socrates does not appear, he acknowledges that atheism exists at Athens, and that it has other more respectable sources than the desire to feel oneself without any higher law restraining one from unbridled indulgence of one's appetites. Of these more respectable sources of religious doubt one is ethical and one (as we should say) scientific. The former is the disgust felt at the stories told by the poets about the gods, such as that of the mutilation of Uranus by his son Cronos. The other is the doctrine that the sun, moon, and stars, which all nations regard as divine, are inanimate<sup>1</sup> and so unable to care for human affairs. This is of course the doctrine of Anaxagoras, which had led to his being charged with impiety at Athens. He taught, as Plato tells us in the *Apology*,<sup>2</sup> that the sun was a stone and the moon earth. It has been suggested that the fall of a meteorite into the Aegospotamos about 468 B.C. had something to do with this theory, for a story—which, as Professor Burnet says,<sup>3</sup> cannot be true as it stands—related that he had predicted this event. The canon laid down by Plato in the *Republic*,<sup>4</sup> that no evil is to be ascribed to God, would, of course, remove the former or moral objection felt to the current religion ; but only at the cost of making almost a clean sweep of the Greek mythology, as well that

<sup>1</sup> γῆν τε καὶ λίθους.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed., p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> 26 D.

<sup>4</sup> ii. 379 c.

contained in the Orphic literature as that related by Homer and Hesiod. In the tenth book of the *Laws*, however, the burden of the argument for the existence of gods is laid on the impossibility of a merely materialistic explanation of the appearances which have led the majority of men to see in the phenomena of the heavens the marks of a designing or informing intelligence. The religion then, which is here mainly in view, is that which finds its objects in the heavenly bodies, and especially in the 'two great lights', the sun and moon. We have already seen<sup>1</sup> that, as Dr. Farnell has pointed out, the worship of these luminaries as such (however the history of the anthropomorphic gods may, in many cases, reflect the incidents of their daily, monthly, and yearly courses) was not specially characteristic of the Greeks; but for that very reason, because it was a kind of worship in offering which Greeks and barbarians were at one, it was just in this worship that Plato and the philosophers were disposed to see an exercise of universal or natural religion. And so here in the *Laws* the habit of bowing to the sun and moon at their rising and setting, common to Hellenes and barbarians alike, is specially insisted upon.

Plato, who was an old man when he wrote the *Laws*, and who speaks in them, through the Athenian Stranger, as an old man, regards sheer atheism—the disbelief in the existence of gods at all—as a youthful extravagance which will not stand the test of the experience of life. No one, he thinks, persists to old age in this belief; but a few do persist in the other two heresies—the denial of divine providence on the one hand, or the belief in divine corruptibility by sacrifice on the other. Agnosticism and superstition, as we might say, outlast dogmatic atheism. Probably the experience of other centuries will be found on the whole to confirm Plato here.

We have seen that the two sources of atheism at Athens

<sup>1</sup> pp. 82, 83.

pointed out by Plato are disgust at the immoral tales related of the gods and the scientific materialism to which the spectacle of the starry heavens presents nothing but brute matter, 'earth and stones'.

Against atheism arising from the former cause he does not here argue. Indeed as we know from the *Republic* he would be in the closest sympathy with it, so far as it was merely a denial of the truth of the mythology. For the existence of such gods as could be the theme of a *chronique scandaleuse* he held no brief; and the fundamental canon of his theology, that nothing but good may be traced to God, rules out of religion anything to which those whose atheism is grounded on the immorality of the mythology can take exception. He naturally then passes this kind of atheism by, and devotes himself to a criticism of that based on scientific materialism.

Here we have to remember that so far as the tenet goes that the heavenly bodies are composed of the same material elements as this earth and its parts, we are all of us at one with the materialists of Plato's day. But Plato's attack upon them is not for that reason without significance for us. It is really in principle what Professor Ward calls Naturalism; the doctrine that the world can be construed throughout as a mere mechanism, that he has in view; and his arguments for the priority of Spirit, whatever we may think of them, do not stand or fall with the belief in a peculiar divinity in the sun and moon. We shall, however, see afterwards that this belief is responsible for a certain weakness in his Natural Theology or Philosophy of Religion as a whole.

The atheists whom he is criticizing he represents as insisting on the priority in the universe not of Spirit or Reason but of φύσις and τύχη, Nature and Chance. To these alone they trace the existence of the elements and their combinations and of the heavenly bodies. Art, τέχνη

(which, of course, implies spirit), is subsequent in origin to these ; to the sphere of art belongs νομοθεσία, or legislation, and to this is due the invention of gods ; they are the creatures of law, they exist, as the Sophists, with whom Socrates had to do, held that moral distinctions existed, νόμος and not φύσει.

Essentially this is a position very familiar to ourselves to-day. The difference in terminology should not disguise this from us. The representatives of modern Naturalism would certainly not place Chance by the side of Nature. But it is doubtful whether they ought not really to do so. As J. S. Mill pointed out,<sup>1</sup> our mechanical interpretation of the system of natural phenomena cannot dispense with an original collocation of the permanent causes ; collocations ultimately, that is, of the atoms, electrons, or whatever else we take the ultimate constituents of bodies to be. And this, if it is not to be regarded as due to rational design, and is also incapable (as it must be) of explanation by a kind of explanation which must presuppose it, may as well be ascribed at once to Chance. By so ascribing it we do no more than reaffirm its inexplicability by reason and its priority to the system of mechanical movement which we call Nature.

Thus the mention of Chance does not in any important sense differentiate the Naturalism which Plato has in view from that with which we are familiar. And the rest of his account is fully applicable to the latter. For many among ourselves also conscious Mind with its purposes and designs is something which has only at a relatively recent period emerged from a world whose evolution had previously gone on for untold millenniums without anything of the kind arising within it ; and only after a further development of many ages did Mind reach that stage in its history at which it invented gods for itself to worship. The whole

<sup>1</sup> *Logic*, iii. 5, §§ 8, 9.

notion now so widely current that in Religion we have to do with an illusion inevitably arising at a certain stage of psychological development, which, when its task is done, is destined to give place to an acquiescence in the mechanical laws revealed by the natural sciences as determining an eternal process of which human life and thought are but a partial and transient phase—this whole notion reproduces in all its essential features the atheism which Plato assails in the passage with which we are concerned.

The maintainers of this naturalistic atheism Plato goes on to describe as holding opinions on morality of the type which he had previously put into the mouth of Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Not only is Religion a matter of custom or law, the law and custom of different states prescribing the worship of different gods, but moral distinctions are no less conventional than religious doctrines; the true life according to nature is that of Might not of Right; a life of dominion over others, not a life of slavery to others. We are here too not far off from opinions by no means obsolete in our own times; it is only necessary to recall the name of Nietzsche to convince ourselves of this.

Such opinions about morality do not indeed always accompany the conviction that Mind is only a late product of a mechanical process, and that Religion is ultimately an illusion. But it may be doubted whether even *la religion du devoir social* which M. Reinach,<sup>1</sup> for instance, sometimes seems to think capable of replacing all religions properly so called is really more secure than they; and this suspicion is increased when we find this learned author elsewhere<sup>2</sup> quoting with approval a definition of morality by M. Anatole France as *la somme des préjugés de la communauté*.

Against this Naturalism Plato takes the field with a decisive assertion of the priority of Reason. Law and Art

<sup>1</sup> *Orpheus*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.



are not to be opposed to Nature. 'They themselves are by Nature, or as good, since they are the offspring of Reason.'<sup>1</sup> And Reason is not something secondary, a by-product of a mechanical process. They are wrong who think that the four elements are the primary forms of reality, and entitled to be called Nature, thus making Soul a secondary thing, the product of these same material elements. Soul, *ψυχή*, is older than the material world, and the activities or products of Soul—*δόξα καὶ ἐπιμέλεια καὶ νοῦς καὶ τέχνη καὶ νόμος*—are to be regarded as prior in the order of nature to 'the hard and soft, the heavy and light'. Not only is *ψυχή* to be regarded as prior rather than (as the Naturalists would have it) posterior to the material world, but it is also the source of motion (*ἀρχὴ κινήσεως*) in the material world itself. This phrase *ἀρχὴ κινήσεως*, which Plato had already used of the Soul in the *Phaedrus*,<sup>2</sup> is of course familiar to us as the name of one of the four causes in Aristotle. Although *ψυχή* is not treated by Aristotle as the source of universal motion, yet his own doctrine, differently expressed as it is, has close affinities with this of Plato's. For he too regarded mechanical motion as due to the impact of another body, as something which must involve us in an infinite regress if we tried to trace it back; so that the original or primary motion of the universe cannot be supposed to be of this kind. This original or primary motion he therefore conceives after the analogy of the voluntary motion of a living being which spontaneously moves towards a desired object. This object in the case of the *οὐρανός* or universe is God, the supremely excellent substance or real being; and thus it is that in the Aristotelian philosophy 'tis love that makes the world go round'. The argument which Plato is here putting forward for the existence of God is in principle the same as that which Aristotle expressed as an argument

<sup>1</sup> Ἐστὸν φύσει ἢ φύσεως οὐχ ἥττον, εἴπερ νοῦ γέ ἐστιν γεννήματα κατὰ λόγον ὑρθόν, 890 D.

<sup>2</sup> 245 D.

from the necessity of admitting an unmoved first mover of the heavens—the argument subsequently generalized as what came to be called the Cosmological Argument. The source of movement is not to be found in dead matter, but the matter of the world is actually in motion; a source of movement therefore is required and can be found only in the soul, whose characteristic, as Plato had already taught in the *Phaedrus*,<sup>1</sup> is self-motion. Still Aristotle's doctrine differs from his master's in some important respects.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle rejects the motion of a truly self-moving being, that is of a being in which that which moves and that which is moved cannot be distinguished. Hence for him the ultimate ἀρχὴ κινήσεως must be itself unmoved. Yet the motion of the world towards God is conceived of by Aristotle as ὁρεξις, and thus is essentially of the kind which presupposes life or ψυχή in its widest sense. He is therefore at one with Plato in holding that a merely mechanical account of the universal motion is insufficient; and that resort must be had to a spiritual nature to make it intelligible.

It is obvious that neither the form in which Plato nor that in which Aristotle presents this thought could as it stands be accepted by any one to-day. It is true that M. Bergson's *élan vital* reminds us of Plato's ψυχή; like Plato's ψυχή it is essentially prior to the material world. But Plato's ψυχή produces reason, art, law, and so forth, antecedently to or independently of the originator of the material world, and this is not the case with M. Bergson's *élan vital*, which only produces or develops into reason after a long process of evolution. Plato's metaphor of a top<sup>3</sup> to represent to us the activity of the soul—I confess that I find it very hard to understand the precise notion which this is meant to convey—is open

<sup>1</sup> 245 c ff.

<sup>2</sup> See *de An.* ii. 404 a, 21 ff.; iii. 433 b, 17 ff.; *Phys.* Θ 5; *Metaph.* Λ 7.

<sup>3</sup> 898 A ff.

to the objection that might be brought against some of M. Bergson's, the objection, namely, that when what one is discussing is the difference between the psychical and the material, the illustration of the former by the latter can only lead to confusion. And in Plato's case the circular movement of the heavens is actually supposed to be somehow like the movement of mind ; and so to suggest the rational character of the cause to which it is due. We cannot follow him here. The system of movements according to mechanical laws would not be held by a physicist of to-day, even though he should be willing to allow that this system cannot yield a complete account of the nature of reality, capable of admitting within its own sphere a movement which involved no dissipation of energy, or a factor which, like Aristotle's God, was not corporeal at all. Yet a purely mechanical system must fail now as much as ever to account for itself as a whole ; while neither vital spontaneity nor (yet more obviously) consciousness and intelligence can be absorbed by it ; they can only be ignored. Life and Reason exist, and cannot be conceived of as merely products of lifeless and mindless matter ; and in the orderly movements of the heavens and of all things which they embrace our reason finds Reason already present. These considerations remain for us as they did for Plato. To some of our contemporaries, as to some of his, they do not seem convincing, but it may be doubted whether anything has happened since his time in the world of thought to invalidate them. They may even be reckoned the stronger in that they have survived so many attempts to annihilate them.

It is otherwise with the special divinity which both Plato and Aristotle ascribe to the stars. To their doctrine on this subject it is not possible for us to adhere, and we may observe in passing that their insistence on it had pernicious results, both for religion and for natural science.

For it encouraged the acquiescence of philosophers in the astrological delusions which, gradually spreading westward, so profoundly affected the minds of men in the time of the later Roman empire; and long after Christianity had robbed the stars of godhead, Aristotle's doctrine of their quintessential nature and perfect motion was, as is well known, an obstacle to the progress of astronomical science even in the sixteenth and seventeenth century of our era.

In the book of the *Laws* which is now under our consideration Plato quite decidedly affirms the divinity not indeed of the heavenly bodies, strictly speaking, but of the souls which move these bodies; these souls reappear, as is well known, in Aristotle's system as the 'unmoved movers' of the different spheres, which stand in the same relation to their respective spheres as that in which God stands to the οὐρανός. The difference in the two doctrines depends upon the difference between the ways in which (as I have already mentioned) the ἀρχὴ κινήσεως was conceived by the two philosophers.

Plato declares that the invisible soul which moves the visible body of the sun is to be called a god, whether we conceive this soul to dwell within the visible body of the sun, as our souls dwell within our bodies, or with another body of its own to propel the visible sun, or to be an incorporeal power acting upon the corporeal sun. And he goes on to say that 'about all the stars, and the moon, and the years and months and seasons, must we not say in like manner that since a Soul or Souls having every sort of excellence are the causes of all of them, such Souls are divine, whether they be living beings and reside in bodies and in this way order the whole heaven, or whatever be the place and mode of their existence? Will any one who admits this venture to deny that all things are full of gods?' 'No one, Stranger,' replies Cleinias, 'would be such a madman.'

We may remind ourselves that Hume, criticizing the Argument from Design, pointed out that it does not by itself prove the *unity* of God ; it is consistent with a number of good and wise beings co-operating in a joint plan.<sup>1</sup> This remark applies to Plato's argument here. The heavenly movements attest the existence of a best soul or souls to guide them ; they do not enable us to decide whether the divine nature to which they bear witness is actualized in one or more individual beings.

We must not, however, so isolate this passage from Plato's teaching generally as to forget that his argument from the order of the heavens, and the *consensus gentium* in acknowledging the divinity of the stars or rather of the intelligences which guide them in their courses to the priority of spirit over matter, cannot be intended to be his last word concerning the divine nature. The World-Soul is, no doubt, not intended here, any more than in the *Timaeus*, to be the ultimate God. The Maker and Father of the world is hard to discover, he says there, and so to speak of his nature to all men is impossible ;<sup>2</sup> and doubtless Plato, in legislating not, as in the *Republic*, for a state to be governed by philosopher kings, but for a more ordinary kind of community, thought that the religious belief to be expected of its citizens antecedently to the particular ordinances which should be established in it, and apart from the special traditions (which the legislator is not to disturb) already existing among those who are to be members of it, would not pass beyond the recognition of the 'visible gods', the stars, with the sun as their chief and centre, to the eternal Ideas and their unity in the Good, of which they are even in the *Republic*<sup>3</sup> treated as the best images and symbols. Hence the multiplicity of souls here, like the multiplicity of minis-

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, v ; cf. Kant, *Kr. der r. V.* and *Kr. der Urth.* ; *Werke*, ed. Hartenstein, iii. 425 ; v. 453.

<sup>2</sup> *Tim.* 28 c.

<sup>3</sup> vi. 506 E ff. ; vii. 516 A, B.



terial gods in the *Timaëus*, does not exclude an ultimate monotheism. At the same time it illustrates an important fact of religious history, namely that where subordinate gods under that name are retained, then, although the unity of the supreme God be unhesitatingly affirmed, the best fruits of monotheism are not reaped.<sup>1</sup> The Platonic teaching as to the divinity, although only the subordinate divinity, of the stars served, as I have already remarked, to give the highest philosophical sanction to sun-worship, which was the chief rival of Christianity in the conflict of religions for the spiritual allegiance of the Roman empire in the third and fourth centuries of our era. Already in the *Epinomis* (the sequel to the *Laws*), which is (I suppose)<sup>2</sup> almost certainly not from Plato's own hand—according to a tradition mentioned by Diogenes Laertius<sup>3</sup> it was the work of Philip the Opuntian—the chief if not the only difference from the *Laws* in doctrine which it exhibits is an increase of the stress laid upon the doctrine of the divinity of the stars.

The caution already given against supposing the pluralism or polytheism of the tenth book of the *Laws* to be the last word of Plato's own theology even when he wrote it, must be borne in mind in considering what is perhaps the most striking feature of this whole discussion of the existence of gods, namely, the dualism implied in the few brief sentences which contain the famous reference to an evil World-Soul beside the good. At first sight this is a very startling suggestion, and it has been held that it is impossible to suppose it due to Plato himself. There seems little or no ground for such a view. The *Timaëus* is no less decidedly dualistic, but in the *Timaëus* the principle of what is evil in nature is not conceived of as a Soul. Still there is nothing

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Sir Alfred Lyall's *Asiatic Studies*, i. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. A. E. Taylor seems to think that it may be genuine. *Mind*, N. S., xxi. 370 (July, 1912).

<sup>3</sup> iii. 25.

incredible or even improbable in this development by Plato of his earlier thought ; on the other hand, the resulting language is, as the doubts it has raised in the minds of critics show, sufficiently unlike that which we associate with Plato, to make it really unlikely that one of his immediate disciples in the Academy would venture to introduce it into the master's text. It is worth observing that it is presupposed in the *Epinomis*. I think we are then justified in accepting it as Platonic, and in recognizing it as a not unnatural development of his earlier teaching.

The recognition that there *is* evil in the world is certainly Platonic ; the view that its source is in the ' matter ' of the world (to use the Aristotelian term), in an indefinite irrational element, whose inherent intractibility the ordering reason of God does not or cannot always overcome, really makes of this element something which, whether we call it Soul or no, we almost inevitably fall into personifying, as possessing, like a bad soul, a perverse and obstinate character. In the tenth book of the *Laws* the greatest stress has been laid, as we have seen, on the importance of assigning to Soul with its predicates of thought and feeling and so forth priority over body with its qualities of weight, hardness, and the like. It would naturally seem inconsistent with this to represent a merely mechanical necessity as equally primary with the good Soul. Yet the good Soul, or Souls, cannot for Plato be the source of the evil element in nature. The thought must then have lain close at hand that this evil element was thus itself traceable to the activity of a soul, of a soul inspired by *ἄνοια* rather than by *νοῦς*, to which all that was disorderly in nature could be referred, as to the good Soul all that was orderly. The good Soul is, as we have seen, not regarded by Plato as necessarily *one*—indeed the variety of the heavenly motions suggest that there are many—and presumably the same would apply to the bad Soul.

It is however due to the high authority of Zeller to note that he is among those who have held this doctrine of an evil World-Soul not to be Platonic.<sup>1</sup> He did not, of course, overlook the dualism of the *Timæus*; but he thought that the representation of the principle of evil in nature as a soul, although not otherwise an impossible development of such a dualism as Plato's, was yet too directly opposed to the express teaching of *Politicus*<sup>2</sup> to allow us to suppose it due to Plato himself. The relevant passage in the *Politicus* is that which describes the origin of the evil in the world by the myth that God at certain epochs lets go the helm of the world and a reversal of the heavenly motions takes place. We must never say, declares the Eleatic Stranger, that two gods with opposite purposes make the world move round in opposite courses. The dualism here rejected, says Zeller, is practically equivalent to that affirmed in our passage of the *Laws*. But this I doubt. The use of the word 'god' is not an immaterial difference. The whole context shows that Plato is in the *Politicus* so far from denying what he asserts in the *Laws*, namely, that the Universe conceived as a living being (and it is this that corresponds to the 'World-Soul') can go wrong, that he expressly asserts this, and only denies that when it goes wrong it is acting under the guidance of God. It is true that he does not in the *Politicus* speak of more than one World-Soul; but the development of such a view in the *Laws* in no way contradicts the denial in the *Politicus* that there are not two gods in the sense of the earlier Dialogue. Dualism is not introduced in the *Laws* into the godhead whose unity is asserted in the *Politicus*; but the two motions of the one living World in the *Politicus* become two Souls of the World in the *Laws*. Nor is it necessary with M. Cumont to see in the passage of Plato the influence of an Oriental dualism such as that of the Persian theology. It is to be

<sup>1</sup> *Plato and the Older Academy*, Eng. tr., p. 545.

<sup>2</sup> 269 E.

observed that, to judge from M. Cumont's note,<sup>1</sup> he has allowed himself to depend wholly on Zeller for his account of the passage, giving indeed no reference to the text of Plato himself, but only to that of Zeller. I may, perhaps, here notice that M. Cumont's unfamiliarity with the text of the *Laws* is also proved by the fact that, in speaking of the divinity attributed to the divisions of time in the astrological religion of the later Roman empire, he does not trace it in Greek literature beyond Zeno, whereas it is plainly asserted in *Laws* 899 B.<sup>2</sup> It is, of course, impossible to deny or assert that Plato may have remembered when writing this passage that the Persians were dualists; but if he may anywhere be supposed to have had this fact in mind, I should think it would rather be in the passage of the *Politicus* where he denies that there are two gods; and we have seen reason to think that the *Laws* do not affirm the doctrine which he there denies. In support of his view that in Plato's evil World-Soul we have an effect of the influence of Oriental dualism, M. Cumont observes that the notion is found also in the *Epinomis*, 'où l'action des théories chaldéennes est indubitable'. By Chaldean theories he means the doctrine of the Persian Magi, as influenced by the speculations of the Babylonian priesthood.<sup>3</sup> I am not quite convinced that the action of these particular doctrines on the *Epinomis* is as indubitable as M. Cumont says. But even if a disciple of Plato, to whom Oriental astrology was congenial, was naturally attracted by a speculation of his master's which might suggest an affinity to a doctrine taught by Oriental astrologers, this by no means shows that Plato's own speculation is sufficiently explained by 'Oriental influence'. Doubtless the speculations on the existence and nature of evil deities over against the good which

<sup>1</sup> *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, p. 386, n. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Already quoted above, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> p. 216.

became prominent at a much later date cannot be explained without reference to the Persian dualism.<sup>1</sup> When we find men trained in Greek philosophy indulging in these—and we find this as early as the time of Plutarch<sup>2</sup>—we must recognize that encouragement was here given by Platonic authority to tendencies traceable to that diffusion of Oriental religious ideas in the West which M. Cumont has described in so learned and masterly a fashion.

We may now consider very briefly the *value* of this recognition of an evil soul or souls as the course of disorder in nature. We must make here, I think, two distinctions: (1) between the recognition of an evil soul or souls as the course of such evil in the world as is not due to human will and an ultimate dualism which would make the evil principle co-ordinate with the good, and (2) between the illegitimacy of tracing such evil in the world as is not due to human will to the will or wills of a spirit or spirits other than human and the dangers of a fantastic demonology.

1. The recognition such as we find in Plato's *Laws* of an evil soul or souls to which is traced the presence of evil in the world antecedent to or independent of human wills is not the same thing as a fundamental dualism. The ultimate problem of the existence of evil remains after such a recognition just where it was before. But that problem is sometimes complicated by the assumption that the presence in the world of what, while we cannot but regard it as evil, yet cannot be traced to human wills involves of necessity a greater difficulty than the fact of the existence of evil human wills themselves. The possibility of human sin seems to be inseparable from the reality of human free-will. It will not be expected that I should here enter by the way upon this famous question of free-will itself. I am

<sup>1</sup> See Cumont, *op. cit.*, ch. vi and vii.

<sup>2</sup> *De Iside et Osiride*, c. 46



only concerned to remind you of the difficulty of admitting the reality of that freedom of the will which is postulated by our moral experience without admitting also the possibility of moral evil. And that evil *is* present in the human will is not deniable. If then the presence of evil in the human will is not incompatible with the ultimate sovereignty of a good God, the presence of evil in finite wills other than human is not incompatible with it, and would in no way increase the difficulty, though it may not diminish it. From Plato to J. S. Mill there have not been wanting thinkers who could not otherwise interpret the facts than by such an admission; and if at times such an admission has seemed a less necessary supposition than at others, this has been due to the fact that it was sometimes thought possible to suppose nothing which we should regard as evil as having appeared in the world previously to the fall of man. Thus Milton, for example, (who however of course describes a more primitive fall of angels with its own consequences for the system of nature) represents in *Paradise Lost* <sup>1</sup> many evils, e.g. animal suffering, as consequent on Adam's transgression. But it is clear that no such representation is possible for us. We cannot suppose, with our present knowledge, that the pre-human world was free from what we commonly call evils (e. g. from animal suffering) the existence of which in God's world constitutes for us a problem, and which seem to have affected injuriously the environment in which man, when he had been evolved, found himself placed, in the sense of making morality hard for him and immorality easy. The recognition of an evil will or wills in the world by which our environment has been injuriously affected in the same way as it undoubtedly is affected by evil human wills, would, while not affording any assistance to us in answering the ultimate question of the origin of evil, yet remove any additional difficulty due to the assumptions we are

<sup>1</sup> x. 706 ff. ; xi. 181 ff.

nowadays so apt to make without hesitation, that, while moral evil is explicable in so far as its possibility is involved in the existence of free-will, moral evil can exist only in human wills, and that the environment of humanity must be attributed wholly if at all to God, and in no degree to the operation of finite wills other than human.<sup>1</sup>

2. The supposition that it may be in part attributed to the operation or be consequential on the operation of such finite wills, suggested by Plato and others, is not to be ruled out because such a supposition has in the past been presented in an unacceptable form. The imagination of primitive man supposed every disease to be due to some malignant power of a spiritual or quasi-personal sort; he was apt to regard no death as truly 'natural' in our sense, but as the work of some malignant power. No doubt, before the sharper differentiation of the 'natural' and the 'intentional', the impersonal' and the 'personal', which *ex hypothesi* had not then been established, such a malignant influence, though readily traced to some human or ghostly enemy, was doubtless often thought of as working in a way we should associate rather with unconscious nature; death from touching something which is *taboo* being thought of ensuing with the same sort of inevitableness, apart from any particular intention on any particular person's part, as it really might from contact with a garment infected by the body of a diseased wearer. We certainly should be falling back into a superstition hostile to the progress of the scientific explanation of our environment, and of practical efficiency in dealing with it, if we were to seek thus for the explanation of particular evils in particular volitions of spiritual beings other than human. But we have no less by common consent excluded for these purposes a reference to divine volitions for the scientific explanation of particular adaptations which we regard as good, or for help in practical dealing with them.

It is admitted on all hands that, if we recognized divine purpose at all, it is not thus to be used ; and all I am now concerned to suggest is, that the recognition of evil or imperfect (though not necessarily wholly evil) finite wills or souls as operative in nature is no more excluded than is the recognition of divine purpose. And I need only here refer to lines of thought which (like that for example pursued by Dr. McDougall in the concluding pages of his important book *Body and Mind*) conduct to the recognition of 'psychical existents'—'souls', if not in the strictest sense 'minds'—as possibly necessary to explain, even in a scientific sense, biological phenomena, such as those of heredity. The history of the falling into disrepute of the hypothesis of finite wills other than human, whether good or evil, as operative in the world which environs us, would, I think, show that there was really a serious danger in it both to Science and to Religion. The Platonic philosophy itself, with its recognition of star-souls and its tendency to leave the current polytheism in possession (although no doubt modified—and it was a momentous modification—by the canon that God was to be called the cause of good only), certainly encouraged a belief in *daemons*, good, bad, and middling, which was eventually to be carried to great lengths. This tendency was bound to divert attention from the sober study of nature's mechanism and to open the door to much fantastic imagining. But we are now more concerned with its bearing on religion ; and here I think it is true to say that it was a great merit in Christianity as a religion that it set bounds to this tendency. The highest interests of religion, as Plato himself had conceived it, were bound up with the concentration of religious devotion upon the supreme goodness ; but this was greatly hindered by preoccupation with a host of inferior spiritual beings, who were legitimate objects of religious worship and barred the way, as it were, to the 'Something over Setebos', which Browning makes his Caliban call, quite in

the spirit of the systems with which primitive Christianity had to struggle, 'the Quiet'. It was not that the early teachers of Christianity were above believing in these beings. St. Paul<sup>1</sup> had no doubt of the reality of principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the places above the heavens, with whom he felt himself to be at war; but he was filled with a confident conviction<sup>2</sup> that Christ had victoriously stripped off from his person these powers as they clung about him, and boldly made a show of them, leading them captive in his triumph as he hung upon the cross. It was essential, if Christianity was to render to the world's religious progress its distinctive service, that it should maintain with increasing clearness its own Lord and Saviour to be not one of these intermediate beings, however exalted, but the highest, the only God made man, so that the way might once for all be open for even the humblest Christian into the holiest of all, and that no star or daemon might be thought able to intercept his 'access through Christ by one Spirit unto the Father'.<sup>3</sup> There has in historical Christianity been no doubt a good deal of practical polytheism; but the denial of the divine name even to the highest saints has been no mere inoperative technicality. Individual saints may have been thought of as having personal favourites and local attachments; but it was never wholly forgotten that only through union of will with the Christian God could they be 'saints' at all, and the chief moral danger of polytheism, the patronage of different ethical ideals by different divine beings, has never become serious. So too, though there has been a good deal of dread, and mischievous dread, of devils, yet the devils have never been regarded as gods or as having any chance of 'a say'—if I may so speak—in the ultimate disposition of things. Their eventual confusion is assured; they are already, it is held, damned beyond hope of salvation.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. ii. 18.

Merciful souls may from time to time have ventured to hope that there was even a chance for the devil :

O wad ye tak a thought and men',  
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—  
Still hae a stake.<sup>1</sup>

And, no doubt, when once one is thinking of these beings as real historical persons, such a hope could not but arise in just those hearts which were most penetrated with the sentiments of pity and love which Christianity at its best has sought to cultivate. But the reluctance of the general mind of Christendom to entertain these speculations had behind it an instinctive sense that powers which, as imagined, are purely evil must have no place in the ultimate order, except one of absolute defeat. One has only to remember the lofty rhetoric of the parting speeches of Lucifer to Cain in Byron's poem to realize that the imagination of the Evil Spirit as *not* destined to complete subjugation involves the thought of a spiritual ambition for man distinct from that of union with the good God.

I must now leave Plato's treatment of the denial of the existence of gods and turn to the second heresy with which he sets himself to deal ; namely that which, while admitting their *existence*, denies their *providence*. To this he passes in 889 D. Again I will begin by summarizing his treatment of it. He says that we are led to reverence the gods by our kinship with them ; but one sees the wicked in such prosperity that, not wishing to blame the gods, we conclude that they are careless of mankind. But God, if he is intelligent and good, must take care not of great things only but of little things also. This is illustrated by examples for human life, from physicians, pilots, generals, and so forth. ' All things are ordered by him whose providence is over all with a view to the preservation and goodness of the whole, and every part of the universe, in acting and being acted upon,

<sup>1</sup> Burns, *Address to the Deil*.



observes so far as is possible the fitness of things ; and over every department down to the least are set rulers to order what they do and what is done to them,'<sup>1</sup> though the universe is not for the sake of its parts but they for the sake of it. 'When the King' (that is, the ruler of the universe just mentioned) 'saw that our actions arose from our souls, and that there was much virtue in them and much vice, and that the soul and body made up a being which, though not eternal, was like the gods of the state<sup>2</sup> indestructible ; for if either body or soul were destroyed there could be no generation of living beings ; and when he observed that the good of the soul was by nature designed to profit and the evil to harm ; he, seeing all this, their positions so devised as might in the easiest and best manner procure the victory of good and the defeat of evil in the whole. And he contrived with a view to the whole the seat and room in which each character that comes into being should be placed. But the formation of characters he left to our individual wills. For every one of us is made pretty much what he is by the bent of his desires and the nature of his soul.' Great sins, Plato goes on to say, of themselves sink the soul into Hades or a yet more terrible region, virtue lifts it into 'the holy place'. For the Divine justice cannot in the long run be escaped. There is no refuge in the depths of the earth or the heights of heaven but you must pay the fitting penalty 'either here or after you have passed into the world below, or have been conveyed into some place more savage even than this. This is also the explanation of the fate of those whom you saw, who had done unholy and evil deeds and from small beginnings had become great, and you fancied that from being miserable they had become happy ; and in their

<sup>1</sup> 903 B.

<sup>2</sup> Οἱ κατὰ νόμον θεοί, who were supposed to have been born but not to die. Stallbaum, however, suspected here an irrelevant gloss, alluding to the subordinate gods of the *Timaeus*, who, though naturally perishable, were, by the supreme God's will, immortal.

action as in a mirror you seemed to see the universal neglect of the gods, not knowing how they make all things work together to the good of the whole.'

We are strongly reminded here of the Psalmist,<sup>1</sup> who vexed his soul over this same problem of the prosperity of the wicked which seemed to point to the absence of any moral government of the world—'until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I the end of these men'. But he, perhaps, meant only to refer to providential judgements in this life, or to the dreadful deaths that await the wicked, while Plato refers to judgements in a life after death. Nowhere more remarkably than in this passage is the influence of Orphicism on Plato's thought more marked. Indeed in this article of the defence of Providence it might almost be said that he appeals to Revelation; but we must notice that, after all, the doctrine of retribution beyond the grave, though described in terms of the Orphic theology, is not put forward as matter of revelation, but rather as inferred from the fundamental principle of Plato's theology, the principle that God is good. Yet, though no express reference is made to Orphicism, the traces of its influence are unmistakable both in the assertion of the soul's kinship to God,<sup>2</sup> and in the mention of the rewards and punishments which await it in the next world. These, which were the elements in Orphicism of most permanent religious value, here as elsewhere receive Plato's most emphatic sanction; there were other sides of the movement,—its mythology, which outdid that of Hesiod in unseemliness, and its selling of pardons for money to be spent on sacrifices—for which he had nothing but reprobation.

In this discussion of the second of the heresies which Plato set himself to combat—that which denies the providence of the gods who are not denied to exist—certain points especially deserve our attention.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> συγγένεια τις θεία.

1. There is the anticipation of the line of thought which is embodied by Leibnitz in his celebrated *Théodicée*. The parts of the world are ordered so as best to promote the victory of good and defeat of evil on the whole. This doctrine is of course capable of being presented in a form which implies a representation of God's merely general providence which would seem to be as imperfect as a system of human law supplemented by no ἐπιείκεια or equity modifying it so as to enable it to meet particular cases. Such a view is stated with startling crudity by the Stoic disputant in Cicero <sup>1</sup>: *magna di curant, parva neglegunt*.

2. Plato will have none of such a merely general providence, but insists on the necessity of a particular providence, although one which considers the parts as what they are—parts of a whole. Here Plato shows his greater profundity; for a providence which is not a particular providence is no providence at all in the religious sense. That the 'very hairs of your head are all numbered' <sup>2</sup> is a conviction which, when once it has been reached, Religion cannot surrender without committing suicide.

3. It is to be noted that, despite the juxtaposition of this defence of Providence with the preceding defence of the existence of the gods, in which the gods mainly in view were the souls or movers of the heavenly bodies, this connexion of Plato's theology with star-worship has here fallen quite into the background. Obviously there is a hiatus between the belief in the divinity of the stars and in that of a moral government. The sun rises upon the just and upon the unjust, and the progress of astronomical knowledge reveals no indication of discrimination between good and evil. This has not prevented the association of belief in a moral government with Sun-worship. There was something of this sort in the ancient religion of Egypt and in the Sun-worship of the latest Graeco-Roman

<sup>1</sup> *de N. D.* ii. 66, § 167.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 30.

paganism,<sup>1</sup> but it was the Sun when out of sight that was the guide of the dead in the former, and doubtless the incongruity of the whole association was a handicap to the latter in its race for victory with Christianity. Christ could be called in a figure the Sun of righteousness and the 'express image' of a righteous God, but righteousness could not without obvious difficulty be ascribed to the literal sun itself, or to a Being whose best image it was.

4. Before leaving this discussion of the second heresy which Plato in this tenth book of the *Laws* makes it his business to refute, the heresy which denied not the existence but the providence of the gods, we may ask ourselves how far we are to suppose that in this doctrine of retribution in another life—a doctrine which, as we have seen, is of Orphic origin—we have what Plato intends us to take for his own doctrine. I have to some extent anticipated the kind of answer which I should be disposed to give to this question. Plato, I conceive, regarded as the object of knowledge most properly so called, as the ultimate object of true science or philosophy, just the eternal and unchangeable goodness, which gave meaning to everything, and in its relation to which all else that we knew had its *raison d'être*, but which itself must certainly transcend all that is real and therefore in Plato's view knowable—ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχον. Of that he was sure, and therefore he was sure that the further we penetrated into the ultimate truth of life and of the world, the more clearly we should see that in it justice and goodness everywhere prevailed over unrighteousness and evil. But philosophy dealt with the eternal nature of things and not with what had once happened or was yet to happen in this life or another. If one asked what had happened or was going to happen before or after the period to which our ordinary

<sup>1</sup> See Cumont, chap. viii.

means of information as to matter of fact extends, we could only reply in a figure or myth which yet must not contradict but must rather illustrate what we know to be eternally true. Hence the future of the soul, if we ask about that, must be described in terms such as he here borrows from the Orphic eschatology, in terms of an exactly righteous retribution. The life of man is experienced as a process in time. Something will happen to us to-morrow, though we do not know what it will be ; all we know is that it will not be something inconsistent with the eternal nature of reality. Philosophy can no more tell us what will happen to us after death than what will happen to us next week, if we live ; and we have not the ordinary analogy of life to guide us in guessing about the former as we have in guessing about the latter. Very likely Plato thought that we should probably pass through such cycles of rebirth as he describes in the *Republic* ; but, as in the *Meno* he says that he does not insist upon our recollection of pre-natal experience, only upon the duty of searching for the knowledge we have not—which could not be a duty did we not *recognize* the truth when presented to us—so here what he would insist upon is the eternal superiority of justice to injustice, of good to evil, however manifested. Thus the Orphic eschatology is no part of his philosophy, but it is agreeable to its principles and serves to set it forth in a figure ; nor is it impossible or improbable that in a general way he *thought*—he would not have said that he *knew*—that something of the sort would happen to the soul after death. Such a position is not, of course, by any means unfamiliar to ourselves. Our traditional representations of heaven and hell—themselves probably not without some historical connexion with the Orphic representations—no educated Christian regards as more than figures by which we typify to the imagination the prevailing power of what we take for eternal principles of right and wrong. If we hesitate to say that we



*know* the Good to be supreme and prefer to speak of our *faith* that it is so, what we describe as *faith* is not merely *opinion*; it is not something that may be thus or not thus within the general system of the reality we know. The belief that it is thus and the belief that it is not thus express fundamentally different views of the world, which, so far as we consistently attend to them, must affect the whole of our experience and make it quite different in the one case from what it is in the other. I will not now inquire whether for a really thoroughgoing pessimism the possibility of knowledge itself would not be cut off; whether all knowledge does not ultimately involve a recognition of the principle of goodness. Plato, I suppose, certainly held that it did. But I think it certainly would be true to say that *faith* in ultimate goodness—in the goodness of God—where it is entertained, does not rank as *opinion*, as something which falls short of *knowledge*, but rather, at least for those who entertain it, as what is presupposed in knowledge itself—the cause not only, as Plato says,<sup>1</sup> of the things that are known *being known* but also of their *being* at all.

From the heresy which denies the providence of the gods we pass to Plato's treatment of the third heresy, which is in the opposite extreme to the second; for it holds that the gods exist and care for the affairs of men, but are persuadable or corruptible by gifts and offerings. We know from the *Republic*<sup>2</sup> that Plato reprobated this doctrine, which, in direct opposition to his own canon of theology that God must be held to be the source of good only and not of evil, divorced religion from morality and represented God as bribable, so that wicked men could escape the just reward of their deeds by the expenditure of money on sacrifices. 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.'<sup>3</sup> Such a debasement of the moral standard moves Plato not so much to

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* vi. 509 B.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 364 B ff.; iii. 390 E.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. l. 21.

argument as to righteous anger. To recognize the divine goodness and justice and yet think it capable of being just what we most clearly see to be unjust and damnable is a fault which has the peculiar heinousness which in the New Testament is found in the 'eternal sin' against the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have, however, several points to notice. I will enumerate them as four.

1. The close association in Plato's thought of Religion with Morality.

2. The relation of the doctrine of propitiation here reprobated with Orphicism.

3. The remedy prescribed by Plato against the progress of this doctrine.

4. The relation of this doctrine to the doctrine of propitiatory sacrifice for sin, which under Christianity has played so large a part in the later religion of the civilized world.

1. I spoke of a divorce between Religion and Morality as being that which Plato regarded with horror as the mischievous result of the doctrine of propitiation which he is concerned to reprobate. But it might by some be alleged that they had never been married; that Plato was only trying to prevent others setting obstacles in the way of a union which he wished himself to bring about; that (to carry on the figure) while he may have eventually succeeded in making the parties go through the ceremony of marriage, they have never very well agreed or been very faithful to one another.

It will not be expected that I should here enter at any length into the difficult problem of the relations, historical and philosophical (if I may use the expression), between Religion and Morality. I will only very summarily state what seems to me to be true about the former. The evolution of morality and the evolution of religion appear to be

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii. 29.

distinct yet closely connected processes. The facts, which Dr. Westermarck for example brings forward in his *Origin of the Moral Ideas*, suggest that among primitive people the development of morality goes on to a great extent independently of their religious belief and yet that this independence is never complete. If I may repeat words I have used elsewhere, 'Religion and Morality are no doubt alike social in their origin. Morality is at first the custom of the tribe, Religion the attitude of the tribe to the mystery which encompasses us. The breach of tribal custom is the violation of a taboo or scruple . . . nor can the tribal deity be supposed indifferent to tribal custom. Right through all the stages of development of both religion and morality they must always affect one another, until at the last we are sure that God can will no evil, nor anything be evil that God wills, and find in this the source of our greatest difficulties. But though there is this perpetual interaction between them, yet the religious sentiment and the moral sentiment are distinct ; and so in the early stages of social development tribal custom is felt to be binding of itself, not because imposed by a god, while a god is not, just because he is a god, bound by the tribal custom. And at later periods, the development of religion and the development of morality by no means proceed of necessity *pari passu*. Religious tradition may continue to consecrate usages which otherwise are, according to the improved moral custom of the time, immoral. We see this abundantly illustrated in the writings alike of the Jewish prophets and of the Greek philosophers. On the other hand the history of Christendom affords numerous examples of the morality which is sanctioned by public opinion lagging far behind the standard officially acknowledged by the recognition as divine of the life and teaching of Christ.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the union of Religion and Morality has rarely if ever been completely

<sup>1</sup> *Problems*, pp. 260-1.

achieved ; yet neither can take the other's place, nor can either apart from the other become what it can when in union with it. No one has ever been more intent than Plato on establishing their union. To him an immoral religion was the worst form of blasphemy or irreligion, and an irreligious morality (such as the morality of the Sophists who grounded moral distinctions in mere arbitrary conventions and not in the ultimate and eternal nature of the Universe) was twin with atheism.<sup>1</sup> His canon of theology was the assertion that nothing but what was good should be ascribed to God. In his ethics he taught that the road lay open from the knowledge of the moral virtues to that principle of Goodness which was manifested in them and which in its transcendent reality was the ultimate principle both of being and of knowledge. If religious worship was to be directed to the sublime beings, the effect of whose living energies was evident to all in the glorious order of the starry heavens, it was because in these was manifested most obviously for most men that supreme Goodness, the knowledge of which as it is was the ultimate goal of the philosopher's arduous progress first from the sensible world to the intelligible, and then, once within the intelligible world, from the sciences which rest upon assumptions and use sensible things as images to the Dialectic which, when it has achieved its aim, is to grasp all Reality as unified in one system under an ἀρχὴ ἀννπόθετος. It has, however, already been pointed out that consequences inconsistent with Plato's cherished aim of thoroughly moralizing religion were involved in his recognition, as proper objects of worship, of these subordinate spiritual beings which can, moreover, be regarded as having co-ordinate, as it were, with them other spiritual beings of like rank who are evil.

2. So much for that which is to Plato his chief interest in his rejection of the doctrine of propitiation, namely, the union of Religion and Morality. I shall now pass on to the

subject of the connexion of this doctrine with Orphicism, of which I shall, however, have very little to say. I will only call attention to the fact, which will already have become apparent, that Plato's treatment of the second heresy which he censures, compared with his treatment of the third, implies a discriminating attitude on his part towards Orphicism as a whole, since to Orphicism belong, I suppose, both the eschatology adopted in the former discussion and the pardon-mongering denounced in the latter. Such a discrimination we may, I think, consider thoroughly justified, for in the field of Orpheus, as afterwards in that of Christ, wheat and tares were sown together, and it might seem that in the one as in the other case the disentangling might pass the wit of man. And we may note that as, on the one hand, the belief in future rewards and punishments which seems to Plato worthily to set forth the eternal justice may sometimes lead to an immoral 'otherworldliness', so the doctrine of propitiatory sacrifice for sins which he denounces as profoundly immoral has sometimes (as I shall shortly point out) afforded a background to a morality as high as any the world has known.

3. Before coming to deal with this last-mentioned subject, I wish to call attention to the remedy proposed by Plato for the evils attendant on the Orphic preaching of propitiation by sacrifices and the traffic of pardon-mongers therein. It is quite what our knowledge of the views expressed of him already in the *Republic* would lead us to expect. All private worship is prohibited, and to the hands of a priesthood recognized by the State is entrusted the discharge of any Godward obligations by which individual citizens may think themselves bound, or of acts of propitiation or piety which the fears or devotion of individual citizens may move them to wish performed. This is, as I say, quite in union with Plato's views in the *Republic* and elsewhere; but it is very different from those to which we in our day are



accustomed. It is only necessary to say, however, that it is thoroughly characteristic of the ancient view of Religion as primarily a function not of the individual but of the community. The difference here implied between the attitude of antiquity and that of modern times is of course reflected in the absence in antiquity of the modern distinction between Church and State. That in thus distinguishing ancient from modern religion one may easily be led into exaggerating alike the social character of ancient religion and the individual character of modern, goes without saying. We shall not understand either if we eliminate the individual element from the one or the social from the other ; and we shall, moreover, destroy the unity between which entitles them to be called alike by the common name of Religion. And in particular, when considering, as we are doing now, ancient Greek religion, we may be rendered blind to the presence even in ancient Greece of religious organizations for worship other than those which belonged to the constitution of the State. Dr. Farnell in his Hibbert Lectures on the *Higher Aspects of Greek Religion* <sup>1</sup> has lately called attention to this danger. At the same time, if these needful qualifications be taken into account, the broad contrast remains. And Plato here as elsewhere plainly emphasizes his hostility to the existence of private religious communities unconnected with the State, such as the Orphic communities, whose doctrines and practices supplied him as we have seen with his leading illustrations both of the best and of the worst tendencies in religion. This fact seems to me to have some bearing on the theory lately put forward by Professor Taylor in his *Varia Socratica* that Socrates was closely connected with, if not a member of, an Orphic brotherhood, and that his connexion with Orphicism was really the 'impiety' of which he was accused. I cannot help feeling it to be a *prima facie* objection to this theory that Plato

<sup>1</sup> See Lecture VI.

should be so constantly on the side of the policy which would ban all cults not recognized by the State and under its control. I do not think that this difficulty is removed simply by supposing that Plato would only uphold this policy in an Ideal State, such as that of the *Republic* or of the *Laws*—in a State, that is, in which religion was rightly ordered. For in the first place Plato gives nowhere any indication of such a point of view; rather he surprises us, when we remember how bold a reformer he could be in other respects, by his constant insistence that the establishment of a religion is something more than a legislator can hope to carry out; that this must always be left to the Delphic Oracle or to the State authority, i.e. must rest upon the traditional sanctions already recognized in the State or in the community which formed the basis of the State before its reform by philosophic legislation. And in the second place the actually existing Orphic system violated Plato's theological canon in its mythology at least as much as the actual State system; and so it cannot be thought that the establishment of that was Plato's aim. This argument might no doubt be met by supposing the particular Orphic community with which Socrates was connected to have been, as a matter of fact, free from the objectionable features which others exhibited; and indeed we can certainly not suppose these to have been approved by him or by his circle. Professor Taylor has, of course, not overlooked the point that Plato severely condemns a certain form of Orphic religion both in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*. 'Plato', he says,<sup>1</sup> 'is in fact face to face with two very different developments of the same original Orphicism'—one of which we may call with Professor Taylor that of the philosophers, the other that of the quacks. Professor Taylor thinks that 'owing to the non-existence of a school of Pythagoreans in Athens it is probable that the sectaries were only known to the Athenian public on their

<sup>1</sup> *Varia Socratica*, p. 27.

worst side'. This would explain the Athenian suspicion of Socrates' Orphic tendencies (although his connexion was really with the better kind of Orphicism not with the worse), and the desire of some of Socrates' disciples, and even to some extent of Plato, to obscure the true nature of the charge against him. But it would, I cannot but think, still be surprising that the recollection of Socrates' relations with a religion other than that of the State should have cast no shade of doubt over Plato's uncompromising opposition to the toleration of any but a State Church in either of his model republics. I fully recognize the force of many of the arguments which have been brought forward by Professor Taylor in support of the view that Socrates stood in a close relation with the higher Orphicism, but I cannot help thinking that Plato's constant Erastianism (if we may by an anachronism so call it), is *prima facie* an argument on the opposite side.

4. I pass on to the last point I mentioned as connected with Plato's discussion of the third heresy among the three which he is here combating: that of the relation of the doctrine of propitiatory sacrifice, which he here and elsewhere so earnestly condemns, to the similar doctrine which became a cardinal article of the subsequent religion of Europe.

I am not here particularly concerned with the historical connexion between the Christian doctrine of the Atonement for sin effected by the death of Christ upon the Cross and the doctrines associated with the mysteries of Orphicism. The recognition of Christ's death as piacular goes back at least to St. Paul and very likely even further; since even if we hold a Pauline influence to be at work wherever words are put into the mouth of Jesus himself by the evangelists which suggest that he expected his death to have this character,<sup>1</sup> yet the deep impression made by the coincidence

<sup>1</sup> This is not certain; I would refer to a striking paper on the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen read by Prof. Burkitt to the Congress of the History of Religion held at Oxford in 1908.

of the death of Jesus with the Paschal festival may well have led his disciples almost immediately afterwards to the thought of him as the true Passover or Paschal Lamb. Even were it not true that, as Professor Percy Gardner has justly observed, St. Paul would not have chosen to dig in the field of the Pagan mystery religions even for pearls of price,<sup>1</sup> yet in this present case the sacrificial system of the Jewish Temple would fully account for a way of regarding the execution of his Master which, while already present in his writings, received its fullest development at the hands of one who was certainly of his school, the anonymous author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The acceptance by the peoples of the Roman Empire of the Christian doctrine of the satisfaction offered in the death of Christ for the sins of the world was doubtless facilitated by familiarity with ideas akin to those implied in that doctrine. This familiarity was due to the spread of religions of a certain type ; a type of which Orphicism was probably the first representative to domicile itself in the world of Hellenic civilization. But the actual historical relationship between Orphicism and the Christian doctrine of sacrifice, which is directly derived from the Jewish, is obviously very remote. So what I am here concerned with is not an historical relationship between these two, but rather an inquiry how far the conceptions of piacular sacrifices denounced by Plato resembled, and how far they differed from, those which are enshrined in the Christian doctrine of the Atonement.

Plato regards the doctrine of propitiation which he reprobates as a doctrine which holds that God is bribable by the sacrifices of wicked men. These sacrifices do not take away sin ; they only in some way induce God to

<sup>1</sup> *Religious Experience of St. Paul*, p. 80. In this book Prof. Gardner emphasizes his abandonment of an earlier theory of his own that Paul's doctrine of the Eucharist was due to the influence of the Pagan mysteries.

overlook it, as money payments induce an unjust judge to release a criminal from the penalties due to his crime. Now although in Christian theology the effect of the sacrifice of the death of Christ upon the relations of God and man who are supposed to have been somehow 'at-oned' or reconciled by means of it, has been represented in many ways, it may, I think, be said, that it has never been held that God was bribed by it to waive the demands of justice.

It has, indeed, been held that God's wrath against sin was somehow vented on a vicarious victim, so that his justice was satisfied without proceeding to the eternal punishment of the sinners. But whatever difficulties this view may contain, it is essential to it that the justice of God was somehow satisfied and not turned aside by a corrupt gift from the guilty party.

This being so, it may, I think, be granted that the Christian doctrine of a propitiatory sacrifice does not, so far as concerns the conception of God implied in it, involve the view of him as an unjust judge which Plato deprecates in the case of the pardon-mongering of his day. It is true that in certain of its developments it has encouraged a conception of God as a gloomy and pedantic tyrant, and an odious form of polytheism or rather of ditheism in which the divine attributes of justice and mercy and love are parted, and the one assigned to the Father, the other to the Son.<sup>1</sup> This, though never a recognized doctrine of the Christian Church, has undoubtedly been a shape assumed by the dogma of the Atonement in imaginations impressed by expositions of it in the language of a forensic mythology. But, though this perversion of the doctrine would certainly have fallen under Plato's censure, it was not this kind of blasphemy that he associated with the notion of propitiatory sacrifice, but rather that which conceived of God as bribable by the gifts of rich

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Olive Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm*, p. 11.



criminals ; and that error has never been chargeable against the Christian doctrine.

On the other hand it is less certain that the Christian doctrine of propitiatory sacrifice can escape the charge of encouraging an immoral attitude in believers who may hope by means of this propitiation to obtain impunity for sin and licence to indulge their passions without fear of the divine judgement, the penalty imposed by which is conceived of as discharged vicariously by Christ. Many great teachers have insisted upon a very different view. Thus the prophet Micah<sup>1</sup> has his great saying : 'Wherewith shall I come before Jahveh and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will Jahveh be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? He hath showed thee, O Man, what is good ; and what doth Jahveh require of thee but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God ? ' Thus the Psalmist<sup>2</sup> of the *Miserere* cries, ' O Lord open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew thy praise ; for thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it thee ; thou hast no delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ; a broken and contrite heart O God thou wilt not despise.' Thus again Kant rejects all *Gnadenmittel* as such, and insists that, if Grace there be, the only means to obtain it that we can recognize without peril to morality is a life of duty, of duty to man which is also duty to God, to whom we can owe no separate duty, such as men have thought to discharge by the performance of sacred ceremonies. All these and many more have either taught or at least suggested

<sup>1</sup> vi. 6 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The Psalmist himself, however, seems to have regarded the spiritual sacrifices which he so beautifully describes as only temporarily a sufficient substitute for the immolation of animal victims, which will be renewed when God has rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

the thought that any offering to God, other than the sacrifice of a good life, is inconsistent with a true religion thoroughly acceptable to the moral consciousness. For such a sacrifice, if from the point of view of barbarous or primitive worship it may seem merely figurative, is in fact the only reasonable service, as much in dignity above every sacrifice of human or animal bodies or of inanimate things as the rational soul of man is in dignity above any material object whatever. Now the Christian propitiatory sacrifice is of course represented as in itself no mere offering to God of a material thing—even of a human body. It is rather the voluntary surrender of a life for the sake of others ; it is ‘ self-sacrifice ’ in the highest, most ethical sense, the very type of all offering by man of himself, his soul and body, to be a ‘ rational, living and acceptable sacrifice ’. But for all but the saving Victim himself it may seem to be something other than the sacrifice of their own lives, and so from their point of view to introduce into religion the essentially immoral conception of the substitution for a good life, to be lived by a man himself, of something else external to the man who ‘ pleads ’ the sacrifice on his own behalf ; who (to quote a well-known English hymn) sets it ‘ between his sins and their reward ’.

Thus it might be plausibly contended that so far as the Christian doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice only expressed the thought of Christ’s death as somehow undergone for the sake of others, and so as a great example of what Comte and Herbert Spencer call ‘ altruism ’, it has furthered the interests of morality ; but that so far as this act of self-sacrifice is thought to affect us otherwise than as a noble example, stimulating us to do likewise in our degree, it falls under the condemnation which we must pass on all attempts to substitute anything as a passport to divine favour for a good life lived by a man’s self. And it might thus be thought that the conception of the death of Christ

as a propitiatory sacrifice in any other sense than that in which we might describe as such the death of any man who gives his life for others—who on a sinking vessel, for instance, puts others into the boats and stays himself to perish—is a conception calculated to be morally injurious, and one which any one interested, as Plato was, in the thorough moralizing of religion might well wish away. Even if the thought of Christ's death as being (though of course from the point of view of a dispassionate contemporary it was nothing of the kind) a voluntary death undergone for others' sake, only originated in connexion with the thought of it as a propitiatory sacrifice, the antitype of those offered under the Jewish Law, according to the theology of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, yet, it might be said, it was the altruism attributed to it and not its supposed atoning efficacy which is of ethical value. Were this so, the only doctrine concerning it which could retain its place in a thoroughly moralized religion would be one which regarded it simply as an example of disinterested altruism. And yet one may well hesitate, in view of the profound significance for Christian ethics which Christian piety has found in it, to think this the last word which can be said on the subject.

It will not be expected that I should, by way of a parenthesis in a discussion of Plato's *Laws*, enter upon what would be in any case a very far-reaching inquiry. To study with any fullness the place which the conception of a propitiatory sacrifice in the death of Christ has held in Christian piety and theology would involve a discussion of the history and meaning of the whole doctrine of the Atonement and of the Eucharistic rite which has been so closely associated therewith. I shall only venture on some observations which will make no pretension to touch anything but the fringe of this vast subject.

I shall first call attention to a fact of considerable importance. One of the most conspicuous features of the Reforma-

tion in the sixteenth century was a reaction against the sacrificial character which Christian worship had then for a long time assumed, if indeed we do not allow it to have belonged to it from the first. The central rite of historical Christianity remained indeed, but was changed, as the phrase went, from a mass to a communion, from a sacrifice to a supper. The outward face of it was altered. No doubt the Churches of the Reformation did not all effect an equal breach with the past ; indeed, to the service of the Church of England much of what I am about to say only to a very slight degree applies, so conservative was she of ancient liturgical customs. No doubt there remained almost everywhere some relics of a ceremonial which in origin was sacrificial. No doubt the Protestant theories of the Sacrament did not strip it altogether of its associations with a sacrifice ; it was still to be a feast at least in memory of, if not even in a figure a feast upon, a sacrifice—a sacrifice once offered long ago by Christ. Still it ceased to be regarded as itself a sacrifice ; and the forms of its celebration were so modified as to suggest this change of view. If we ask what were the principles embodied in this great revolution it would carry us much too far to attempt a complete answer, for the whole movement which we call the Reformation was concentrated in it. But it would be true, I think, to say this about it, that it involved an abandonment of the view of the Eucharist and so of the worship of the Church as, in the ordinary sense of the word, sacrificial ; but that it counterbalanced this abandonment by renewed emphasis on the sacrifice of the death of Christ, which the Eucharist was held to commemorate. There was then involved in the change brought about by the Reformation a revolt against the results of that whole process of evolution in Christian worship, in the course of which it had appropriated those features of mystery and sensuous magnificence whereby the heathen worship, with which Christian writers had once been apt to contrast the simplicity of

their own, had formerly impressed the imagination of its devotees. This appropriation had followed from the recognition of the Christian Eucharist as a true sacrifice, entitled to all the adjuncts of dignity and splendour which either tradition from pre-Christian times or the Old Testament records or propensities deeply rooted in human nature had associated with the notion of sacrifice; and it had been encouraged by the doctrinal development which culminated in the establishment of the dogma of Transubstantiation. In this dogma the divine Presence, of which from the first Christians had been conscious 'in the breaking of the bread', was focused as it were on the material elements of bread and wine, to the exclusion of other factors in the whole act of worship, and in abstraction from the use of these elements in their consumption by the worshippers. The student of the history of religion must no doubt recognize that to describe this dogma as purely materialistic in tendency is not accurate. To recognize in the material elements used in the social intercourse of the community a vehicle of spiritual reality there actually present, and not merely present in memory or in imagination, or by some legal fiction of representation, was to suggest a thought of greater profundity and religious significance than belongs to doctrines which see in the ceremony nothing but a symbol, an acted metaphor, or again a mere stimulant of pious feeling. And even the insistence, which is apt to seem so monstrous to unsympathetic critics, on what is described in the scholastic theology of the Western Church as the total conversion of the natural substances of bread and wine into a different substance altogether, had from one point of view a tendency away from and not towards materialism. For it was sought thereby to escape altogether from any danger of genuine idolatry, of worshipping an inanimate thing, by the denial, not only that this was what was worshipped, but that it was substantially there at



all. The Thing there was not, it was asserted, this bread to which our senses seemed to bear witness,—not that at all—but the Divine Humanity itself disguised in that likeness. But, while it would not be just to the scholastic theologians or historically accurate to overlook this effort to avoid a direction of worship to mere things—conceived of, indeed, as invested with supernatural potency, but still remaining *things*—yet it cannot be denied that the doctrine of Transubstantiation, by *localizing* the divine presence (however the scholastic writers might refine in their discussions of this point), by making it consequent on the utterance of a correct formula and independent of moral dispositions in consecrator or recipient, and by the special dignity conferred upon the priesthood in virtue of their mysterious power of using this formula effectively, inevitably provoked a reaction in favour of a form of worship which should be throughout rational and spiritual and should exclude all that savoured of what seemed to be heathenish or magical, to dispense with or subordinate the exercise of intelligent faith, or to interpose a priestly mediation between the individual soul and its God. We need not be surprised to find that this reaction was often indiscriminating; but (and this is of importance to our present purpose) it did not by any means cast out from Christian theology that emphasis on Propitiatory Sacrifice which the Catholic Church had embodied in the ritual of the mass. On the contrary, it laid, on the whole, an even increased emphasis upon the original sacrifice of the death of Christ. This it did in so far as it guarded so carefully, by its suppression of the sacrificial element in the eucharistic rite, against any supposition of its repetition therein, and in so far as the denial from fear of an infringement of Christ's prerogative of a priestly character to the Christian ministry, brought into stronger relief the priesthood attributed to Christ himself. Thus, whatsoever attempts may have been made by

individual theologians, both before and after the Reformation (for example by Abelard<sup>1</sup> and Socinus<sup>2</sup>), to relegate the whole sacrificial idea to the background of the Christian consciousness, and to understand the scriptural language which embodies it as merely metaphorical, yet historical Christianity, in its Protestant as well as in its Catholic shape, though with a shifting of emphasis, has throughout clung to that idea as to an essential factor in its religion. In comparing this attitude of historical Christianity with that of Plato, from the consideration of which we set out, our problem is, we must remember, simply that of the relation of this sacrificial idea to morality.

I think it may be shown that this relation is not one of inconsistency, or even of mere juxtaposition. The latter, indeed, it plainly is not. Beyond doubt, if there is no genuine harmony between the two, the sacrificial idea must be hurtful to morality. It must intrude the thought of a spiritual value in something other than our voluntary acts, and this thought must interfere with such a moralization of Religion as Kant had in view, in which nothing is left in Religion but Morality and what is merely symbolical of Morality. But we have already said both that Religion is quite distinguishable from Morality, and also that apart from Religion it is not possible for Morality to be what in unison with Religion it may become. Thus the doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice in Christianity may be found related to its morality as Religion is related to Morality in general.

What then are the characteristics of Religion which at once distinguish it from Morality and also enable it in a special way to be complementary to Morality? I will now endeavour to answer this question.

If we want to know in what particulars Morality can not take the place of Religion and must either resort to Religion

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in Ep. ad Rom.* ii; *Opp.* ed. Cousin, ii. 204 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *de Iesu Christo Servatore*; *Opp.* ed. Irenopol. 1656, ii. 115 ff.

for supplementation or go its own way unsupplemented, we should expect to find the answer in the great ethical thinker who, with a sense of the autonomy and urgency of the moral consciousness which is unsurpassed in the history of thought, held that Religion had nothing to add to Morality and could only offer to add anything at peril of destroying Morality altogether from the root upwards. I refer of course to Kant. Now what in Kant's ethical teaching strikes us as most difficult to accept, while yet it is most closely bound up with his whole position, is the sharp and irreconcilable opposition which he sets up between the 'ought to be' and the 'is', the decisive relegation of all connexion between the individual will and its environment to the region of mere appearance—although, it is true, of an appearance whereof we cannot rid ourselves. Now it is just here that Kant's ethics reveal the deficiency of a Morality which keeps Religion at arm's length or seeks (with Kant) to confine it 'within the limits of mere Reason',<sup>1</sup> namely, of the Practical Reason, which expresses itself in the consciousness of moral obligations.

Certainly it is true that the moral consciousness is a consciousness of what 'ought to be' not of what 'is'; of an obligation, not of a fact. One will never discover what is right to do by a study of what men as a matter of fact actually do. This Kant has taught with a decisive emphasis which was necessary once and for all to put an end, for those who have learned his lesson, to the notion that a 'natural history of morals' can take the place of a 'moral philosophy' which recognizes the real distinctness of the moral experience from any other.

Not less valuable is Kant's clear statement of what the freedom must be which is implied in our consciousness of a moral law; namely, that, whatever difficulties may be presented by the determinism of Natural Science to our moral

<sup>1</sup> This is the title, it will be remembered, of the book which Kant especially devoted to religious problems.

experience, we can impute to ourselves, as sin or as righteousness, that—but only that—which genuinely originates in our own will. It is just Kant's concentration of his vision on these two aspects of morality which makes him comparatively inattentive to the aspects I shall now attempt to describe ; though I shall show also that he did not entirely ignore them.

Morality is, as Kant taught, autonomous ; to make it a matter of means to some end beyond, is to empty it of its true essence. Yet, since it is a genuine form of our experience, a necessary expression of our reason, we are unable, in recognizing it as such, to suppose it, when we think of it, to be something which does not reflect (if we may so put it) the true nature of Reality. To suppose Reality ultimately indifferent to the values of which in Morality we are conscious, would introduce, in face of what Butler calls<sup>1</sup> the 'manifest authority' of Conscience, an incoherence into our experience which we cannot tolerate without renouncing that confidence in the rationality of the real which the claim to possess the knowledge presupposes. Hence our recognition of the moral law as binding, though it waits for no ulterior sanction, cannot be reconciled with the rest of our experience without such a faith in the actual supremacy of the Good as Plato (we remember) holds to be involved in the procedure of our reason. Now this faith is just what Religion supplies to Morality. Kant did not ignore this consideration altogether. On the contrary it is the ground of his so-called 'moral argument for the existence of God', of the postulation by the Practical Reason of a *Summum Bonum* and therefore of a Power capable of producing it. But his presentation of the thought suffers from the external and arbitrary air which he gives to it ; and this again is due to the fact that he is ill at ease in treating that as a postulate of Morality the thought of which he yet

<sup>1</sup> *Serm.*, ii.

held it could not but injure morality fatally to admit, if I may so express it, into the moral experience itself. But the religious faith in the actuality and supremacy of the Good whereof we are in morality conscious as what 'ought to be' only conflicts with the intrinsic obligatoriness of that which we 'ought to do', if it be thought to render our action superfluous, as being merely a means to an end already otherwise achieved. But this it is not bound to do, if our 'good will' be thought of as the only activity through which we can apprehend the nature of that in whose activity and supremacy we thus believe; so that, apart from it, this faith cannot exist or maintain itself within us or indeed be for us anything at all; or, to put it in another way, unless our 'good will' be thought of as no mere means to an end already otherwise achieved, but rather as the living participation in this Good, the knowledge of which is distinguishable but not separable from the activity of will which is morality. Thus here, although, as we have seen, Religion and Morality are not the same, yet both only come to their full development in a unity outside of which neither is what it professes to be. For apart from Morality, Religion is not the apprehension or consciousness of the Highest; and apart from Religion, Morality is not the willing of that which is good, not merely for us but (if we may so express it) in the ultimate nature of things. In fact what Kant is denying in his insistence that Morality is not conceived with what *is* but with what *ought to be*, is not really a transcendent Good, such as that of which Plato spoke, which (like Kant's own Moral Law) abides whole and entire, whatever good acts are done or left undone in the phenomenal world, but simply the possibility of a 'natural history of morals', of an induction of moral laws by way of generalization from observed facts of human behaviour. But what, it may here be asked, has the conviction of the actuality and supremacy of the Good to do with a belief in a Propitiatory Sacrifice? We seem



at first sight to have wandered quite away from our original question. Plato, it may be said, could express his conviction that the Good was the ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετος of the hierarchy of real being, apart from any doctrine of a Propitiatory Sacrifice. Having, however, just mentioned (to show that I am not unmindful of it) this question of the relevance to our problem of the considerations with which we have just been concerned, I will, before directly dealing with it, pass on to the second of the two aspects of morality on which we saw that Kant was specially concerned to insist, and his preoccupation with which we thought was the reason of his neglect to give their full weight to those aspects which call for supplementation by Religion. I have treated elsewhere<sup>1</sup> at some length of Kant's teaching respecting Grace, and this must be my excuse for dealing with it very shortly now. Briefly, Kant does not exclude the possibility that Grace may be needed and may be supplied to enable us to live well, but denies the possibility of our discriminating its action from that of our natural dispositions and moral character, and holds that without demoralizing Religion we can recognize as legitimate no efforts on our part to obtain it otherwise than by a good life, which alone can *deserve* it, if it be needful at all. This refusal to recognize that spirit of *dependence* in which, by a reaction such as the general history of thought would lead us to expect, Schleiermacher in the next generation saw the very essence of Religion, was the other side of Kant's preoccupation with the autonomy of the Good Will. Morality and heteronomy were inconsistent. Although the Moral Law might be envisaged for the assistance of our imagination as a divine command, this (Kant held) is permissible only if we realize that the obligatoriness of the law is intrinsic, and that it can only be known to be a divine command through its being independently recognized as intrinsically and unconditionally

<sup>1</sup> *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 92 ff.

obligatory. Here Kant introduces his conception of a *holy* will. The appearance in our consciousness of the law as a law, as obligatory, is in his view due to the presence in our nature of an element—the sensibility—which is recalcitrant to what for a purely rational being (such as we take God to be) would be a necessity of nature. Now I venture to think that Kant here is not a strictly faithful reporter of the facts of our moral experience. He is true to them so far as he urges that no act is truly moral in its own right which we do not see for ourselves to be obligatory; that where we will something as a means to an end, or as authoritatively indicated, it is to our choice of the end or to our acceptance of the authority, and not to the consequential volition, that moral predicates can be properly ascribed. But the consciousness that, in willing what we thus will on its own account as good, we will it as not our own will, but as God's (or as the objective Law), this is not merely to be explained by the recalcitrance of sensibility, so that in a perfect spiritual being such as we call God there would be no such element of surrender present. Just as, on the one hand, Kant (to quote the poet Schiller's famous epigram) would have us always obey the law with horror, and only grudgingly leaves any room for such a cheerful and even joyful performance of his duty by man as the sense of intimate union with God (or even with Nature) has rendered possible to many noble souls; so, on the other hand, God's will is by him thought of as wholly free from the moment of negativity which is so essentially characteristic of ours. Kant (to parody and invert Matthew Arnold's praise of Goethe) makes man not enough a God, God not enough a man. We are now in view again of the doctrine of Propitiatory Sacrifice. This character of the moral life as involving a negative moment is just what we call by a metaphor, so deeply rooted in our language that we hardly think of it as such, the element of self-sacrifice in Morality. When man has come to realize that Freedom,

that autonomy, which Kant so strongly emphasized as the keynote of his moral life, he looks upon his ancient heritage of sacrificial custom with new eyes. The blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin.<sup>1</sup> Yet of sin he is conscious, and of the need of its taking away ; but herein he must act for himself ; he must put away sin by the sacrifice, not of others, but of himself. The yet more primitive step upwards by which he had substituted the sacrifice of animals everywhere for that of human beings had not been without an accompanying loss. The sacrifice must be not only his own act, but he must himself be the victim ; only thus does his autonomous personality come to its rights. That such a sacrifice should be seen as the principle of the good life, and therefore, for the religious faith that the good life is not only to be lived by us but is actually lived eternally by God, as involved in the life of God himself, this is the thought of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. That doctrine thus becomes the complement and inspiration of Morality, not, like the doctrine of propitiation which Plato reprobated, its negation. Man, conscious as an ethical being of moral values and practically recognizing by his self-surrender thereto the obligation of the moral law, is thus also a religious being aware that in this consciousness and practice of his he is no stranger in an alien universe, no lonely struggler against hostile powers of overwhelming strength, but a sharer of the world's central life and thought. I am not here concerned to argue that this supplementation and inspiration of morality by religion can be expressed in this way and no other ; I am concerned only to indicate that the Christian doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice *does* express this, and has therefore been capable, as the doctrine reprobated by Plato was not, of coexisting with and even of supporting and inspiring a lofty morality. The doctrine reprobated by Plato spoke of sacrifices offered by men out of their worldly wealth to bribe the divine justice and so to escape the penalty

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 4.

of their wrongdoing while continuing to sin boldly because assured of impunity. Such a doctrine lowered the conception of God as moral governor, and weakened the consciousness of moral guilt by fostering a horror, not of sin but only of its consequences. On the other hand, the Christian doctrine spoke of a sacrifice offered not by the wicked but by the righteous, the benefit of which the wicked could only receive if by a genuine repentance they alienated themselves in will from their sin. Such a doctrine heightened the conception of divine justice and was incompatible with a resolve to go on sinning. It is, of course, not denied that the Christian doctrine has sometimes been represented in a way less easily contrasted with that condemned by Plato; but such perversions have lain apart from the main current of Christian thought and piety. And it is remarkable that when, as we have seen, Western Christendom came to divide itself into two camps, equally upholding the doctrine of a Propitiatory Sacrifice, but with certain differences of emphasis, each camp tends to criticize the other's characteristic statement of the doctrine in either case on the ground (a thoroughly Platonic ground) of its incoherence with a completely ethical religion. Thus on the one side the Sacrifice of the Mass is criticized as attributing to a commemorative ceremonial the virtue which, it is held, can without injury to spiritual religion be attributed to the voluntary self-surrender of Christ for others' sake which it commemorates, but cannot be attributed to the commemoration itself without leading to the immoral view that man's punctual performance of ritual obligations can take the place of, or at least can be set beside, his performance of moral duties. On the other hand, the doctrine of Justification by Faith in another's sacrifice once for all vicariously offered, apart from good works done through a continual renewal of grace through the sacraments, which convey its efficacy again and again to the individual—this doctrine of Justification

by Faith *alone*—is criticized as a direct denial of moral values, a discouragement to virtuous conduct, even sometimes as an encouragement to Antinomianism. Especially is this the case when that doctrine is combined with an exaggerated disparagement of the natural freedom of the human will, which is thus treated as freedom only to do evil. The continued existence in sharp opposition of Catholicism and Protestantism, as rival developments of a common religion, points perhaps to a certain onesidedness in each. We are here, however, only concerned to note that, while the Christian doctrine of a Propitiatory Sacrifice is, as we have seen, not only compatible with a thoroughly ethical religion but has been an inspiration to such an one, yet it is easy to develop different elements in it in such a way as to make it in one respect or another incompatible with a thoroughly ethical religion; but that the thorough agreement of Morality and Religion, according to Plato's canon, is common ground to the supporters of both versions of the Christian doctrine, and that the supporters of each criticize those of the other for endangering this agreement.

It now only remains to point in conclusion to certain general inferences, which we may draw from the study of the theology of the tenth book of Plato's *Laws* which has occupied us during the present term. We see, as our introductory discussion had already prepared us to find, that Natural Theology, even in the hands of so great a thinker as Plato, is not independent of what, whether we call it 'revealed religion' or no, we may at any rate without begging any question call institutional religion. The institutional religion which has deeply affected Plato's natural theology is, we saw, not so much the State religion of Athens as the star-worship which seemed to him and also to Aristotle the common element in the religious institutions of barbarian and Hellene alike; and we saw that this circumstance did not go for nothing in the development



which made a worship of this kind practically the established religion of the later Paganism and the most serious rival of Christianity. The weakness of Plato's natural theology, as put forward in the book we have been studying, we saw to lie precisely in the defects of this religion. This religion was not the less a Naturalism because it was involved with errors concerning the system of nature which the later progress of the natural sciences has exploded ; and being Naturalism the connexion of Morality with it was forced and precarious. Such as it was, it was established for Plato himself by means of the conception of the good Soul of the World, which caused the orderly revolutions of the heavens, and by that of the position assigned to the Sun as the child and image of the Good.<sup>1</sup> This was inevitable, because Natural Theology is dependent on actual religion, and Greek religion (and here we must include the special State-religions as well as that which seemed to Plato to be the universal religion of mankind) was rooted in nature-worship, and was not really historical or ethical. Myths which were in their origin devised to describe natural processes took the place which in Christianity, for example, was taken by what was, at least in intention, a real history of a morally good life. It was to assist the weakness of Greek religion and the resultant natural theology on this side that Plato had recourse to Orphicism ; but, as we saw, from the point of view of morality Orphicism uttered an uncertain sound. Even its eschatology needed to be purged of the association of rewards and punishments in another life with ceremonial initiation or non-initiation in this ; and, though once so purged, this eschatology could be used as a symbol of eternal moral verities, the Orphic mythology and the Orphic use of ritual was less easily accommodated to an ethical purpose. Hence, even with the help of Orphicism, Plato could not construct a Natural Theology wholly agreeable to his aim of

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* vi. 506 E.

thoroughly moralizing Religion with the material ready to his hand in the religion of his country. The characteristic difficulty of Natural Theologies based on Christianity has lain in just an opposite direction, namely, in connecting a conception of God fundamentally historical and ethical with Nature. This is the reason why Christian Natural Theology has inevitably concerned itself, in a way alien on the whole to the thought of antiquity, with the question of miracles, which seemed necessary in order to bring the natural order into connexion with the values of which history and morality take account. It has not, of course, been held to belong to Natural Theology as distinguished from revealed to enter upon the consideration of the evidence for the occurrence of particular miracles ; but the defence of the possibility of miracles and the criticism of a view of nature which excluded this has seldom been absent from the mind of those who, holding a conception of religion based upon Christianity, have addressed themselves to the problems of Natural Theology. On the other hand, for those who have entertained a view which excludes miracles it has been necessary to defend this view against a presumption that a religious view of the world must include the possibility of the miraculous. Into this problem of the place in religion of a belief in miracle I do not propose to enter now. I only desire to point out that it is for a religion which, like Christianity, is primarily historical and ethical, and therefore for a Natural Theology which has such a religion for its background, it is more urgent than for religions which are fundamentally nature-religions and for a Natural Theology which presupposes such. The difficulty which such religions and the natural theologies connected with them have is just the opposite difficulty : not how to bring the course of nature into connexion with the religious doctrine, but how to bring morality into connexion with a religious doctrine which is at bottom naturalistic.

# NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

## I

### INTRODUCTORY

MY last course of lectures dealt with the Natural Theology of Plato ; that of this term will take up the story of Natural Theology at a point very remote from this in time, and will put before you some leading facts relating to the thoughts upon this subject of the writers who belong to the first half of the second millennium of the Christian era in the west of Europe, the Latin Schoolmen, as we call them, and their immediate successors in this part of the world. Between Plato and the earliest of these writers lay an interval of some thirteen hundred years ; and these years had seen the appearance of Aristotle's philosophy, the victories of Alexander, the rise of the rival Schools of the Stoics and Epicureans, the establishment of the Roman Empire, the foundation of the Christian religion and its acknowledgement by the authorities of the Roman Empire as the religion of the State, the overthrow of the Roman Empire in the West by the barbarian invaders and the gradual education of these invaders by the Roman Church in the intellectual tradition of the Christianized Empire. In this tradition, of which the Roman Church was in the West the main surviving depository, were found in a somewhat unstable synthesis the heterogeneous traditions of the classical culture and of the Christian religion. A history of Natural Theology during this period would deal with the Natural Theology of Aristotle, of the Stoics, of the later Platonists, and of the Christian Fathers. It is obviously

desirable that the holder of a temporary Lectureship—especially when the Lectureship affords him no leisure from his ordinary work—should select topics on which he may chance already to have something to say rather than vainly to attempt to cover a vast field to much of which he is little more than a stranger and some of which is already tolerably familiar to students here. And hence no apology is, I think, needed for the leap which I propose to make from Plato to Anselm.<sup>1</sup> In my introductory lectures on the History of Natural Theology<sup>2</sup> I ventured to dispute at some length the contention of Professor Pfleiderer in his book on the *History of the Philosophy of Religion* that there was and could be no Philosophy of Religion either in Classical Antiquity or in the Christian Middle Ages; in the former because the independent nature of religious experience was not recognized, in the latter because there was no free, and so no genuine, philosophizing upon it so long as the dogmas of a particular religion were treated as authoritative. I did not, of course, dispute that a disentanglement of religious from political experience greater than the philosophers of classical antiquity had achieved was a necessary step in the development of the philosophical treatment of the former. Still less did I deny the necessity to genuine philosophizing of freedom from presuppositions uncritically assumed from without. But I maintained that in respect to the Middle Ages the actual extent of the disabilities imposed by the Church upon the freedom of speculation might easily be exaggerated; and that, on the other hand, the work of Spinoza (which Professor Pfleiderer takes for

<sup>1</sup> Two courses relevant to the subject of this book, and concerning the period between Plato and the Middle Ages, were given at Oxford at the same time as the present course, under the auspices of the Delegates of the Common University Fund. Of these Mr. Edwyn Bevan's on *Stoics and Sceptics* have been published by the Clarendon Press; and Mr. Warde Fowler's on *Roman Ideas of Deity in the first century B.C.* by Messrs. Macmillan & Co.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 57 ff.

his starting point) does not inaugurate a period of complete independence of theological or even of ecclesiastical assumptions. Such, indeed, are (we saw) by no means absent from Professor Pfleiderer's own discussions ; while, even so far as the use of such assumptions is concerned, it is necessary to distinguish between a reference to mere authority—a reference which must be out of place in philosophy—and a reference to the actual facts of the experience which we are seeking to understand ; this latter reference being not only legitimate, but indispensable to sound philosophizing. It was, however, not denied that these two sorts of reference were not always distinguished in writers of the Middle Ages or indeed, for that matter, in writers of more modern times. Lastly, I endeavoured to point out that the limitations imposed by Professor Pfleiderer to the range of the Philosophy of Religion really implied a view of religious experience in general as of merely subjective validity, which, while far from uncommon among modern students of religion, was elsewhere condemned—and to my mind rightly condemned—by Professor Pfleiderer himself.

Hence I conceive that a study of the Natural Theology of mediaeval schoolmen and their immediate successors may be a real contribution to the history of the Philosophy of Religion, and I propose in the future lectures of this course to call your attention to certain conspicuous writers between the eleventh century and the seventeenth. With the former century our modern classification of historical periods would date the end of the Dark Ages. We are no longer accustomed to call ' dark ' the age adorned by such illustrious works of thought and imagination as (to name only a few out of many) the *Summa Theologia* of St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Gothic cathedrals, the chivalrous legends of King Arthur, the acted poem of St. Francis's life, and the *Divina Commedia* of Dante. The limit of our period at the other end is that fixed by Professor Pfleiderer for the



commencement of his own history of the Philosophy of Religion with the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza. Between the Dark Ages and Spinoza then I would call your attention to the following thinkers: Anselm, Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, Raymond of Sebonde, Pomponazzi, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury. In the first and second of these alike no sharp line is drawn between Natural and Revealed Theology. Yet the point of view of the one is different from that of the other. *Anselm* seeks an argument which ought to convince even an unbeliever in revelation, by sheer force of reasoning, that God exists; and he does not doubt that, this point of vantage once secured, the rest of the traditional heritage which the Christian has received on trust can be shown on reflection to be intelligible and even philosophically necessary. *Abelard* is more conscious of difficulties in the way of such an enterprise and sometimes gives at least the impression of readiness to sacrifice that which in the traditional theology is most intractable to such an attempt to rationalize it. Hence in Abelard we find a tendency to Rationalism which is absent from Anselm; but here, as often, the passage to Rationalism is a proof not (as might at first be thought, and indeed has often been thought) of greater confidence in reason, but rather of less; because it implies, if I may so express it, a greater distrust of the power of Reason to assimilate the material presented by Faith. But alike in Anselm and in Abelard there is no hard-and-fast line drawn between Revealed and Natural Theology. In *Aquinas* such a line is drawn; and a certain part of the material presented by Faith is definitely declared to be of such a kind that it could not be discovered by the Reason of man apart from a definite revelation. Nor is the part of the material of faith so dealt with merely historical material (as to which we might readily admit that it could not be discovered *a priori*), but dogmatic material also. This discrimination of the spheres of Natural and Revealed

Theology leads in *Raymond of Sebonde* to an exposition for the first time of Natural Theology under that name as a subject apart from Revealed. In the Renaissance writer *Pomponazzi* it is clear that, under whatever ambiguity of phraseology, we are dealing with a mind for which the incompetence of natural reason to deal with Revealed Theology is due, not to its supernatural, but to its merely traditional character and its lack of objective attestation. We are thus prepared for the appearance in *Lord Herbert of Cherbury* (who passes as the founder of Deism) of an explicit concentration of attention upon Natural Theology to the neglect of the results of any alleged revelation, and for his formulation of a creed (of five articles, as we shall see) expressive of those fundamental religious truths which are in the view of its author intuitively perceived by the human mind in all ages and all countries.

Before, however, taking these six representative thinkers in turn, I propose to give some account of the principal points in which the intellectual situation of the men of the Latin Middle Ages differed, so far as regards Natural Theology, from that of the ancient Greeks, with the greatest of whom my last course was concerned.

In the first place, the primacy of Spirit for which Plato had so powerfully contended against the materialistic Naturalism of his day is fully acknowledged. Explicit denial of it could hardly hope for a hearing. But a development had taken place in the sense or consciousness of individual personality, as a result of which individual personality had come to be regarded as a fundamental characteristic of spiritual being in a way in which it had not been so regarded in classical antiquity. This change is very difficult to describe without inaccuracy, but I will afterwards attempt to expand the brief statement of its nature which I have just given. In the second place, we are

still in the Middle Ages nearer to the Platonic confidence in Reason, the conviction that the fuller the satisfaction attained by our intelligence the more fully is the nature of Reality open to us, than we are to the Kantian denial that the object of our knowledge is ever the thing as it is in itself. I shall show, however, that a certain movement towards this Phenomenalism (if we may so call it) is already apparent in the formulation by the first of the thinkers we are going to consider—Anselm—of the so-called Ontological Argument, although it was upon this very argument that Kant, rightly perceiving in it the very heart of what he attacked as the ‘Rational Theology’, and indeed of the whole position that we can know things as they are in themselves, directed his most energetic attacks. And I shall also draw attention to an important result of the belief that a supernatural Revelation of supreme importance had actually been made to men, and had put, not the wise only but also the simple and unlearned, in possession of truths of which the reason apart from such revelation had not as a fact attained assurance, even if without such assistance it was capable of attaining it. Such a belief was, I shall point out, bound to lessen that reliance on the free exercise of the intellect which was characteristic of Greek antiquity, even if such free exercise had been itself as natural and delightful to men of another race and at a much lower level of general culture as it had been to the Greeks themselves. In the third and last place, I shall attempt to show that another feature of the Platonic Natural Theology which had not been utterly lost and which was to become more prominent again in the later Middle Ages—the attribution to the stars of a superhuman nature—was a *damnosa hereditas* which, although originally regarded by Plato as a bulwark against Naturalism, came inevitably to be the point at which the Platonic tradition was most vulnerable to attacks from that side.

Let me now elaborate these observations.

It is a remark that is often made that Personality is a conception of greater importance in modern than in ancient philosophy. Like many other remarks of the kind, this probably embodies a perception of some real fact, but it can by no means be regarded as satisfactorily indicating the true nature of that fact. For few terms stand more in need of further explanation than this term Personality. It is a double-faced term, so to say; it distinguishes an individual from an universal, and yet it is not applicable to any individual being but only to such an one as is conscious of itself as an instance of a universal. This is brought out in what the mediaeval Schoolmen regarded as the classical definition of *Persona*. This definition is given in the Christological treatise which passed under the name of Boethius; but which can scarcely be his if, as would seem from its preface, it was written at the time of the Council of Chalcedon, about twenty years before Boethius was born. This famous definition runs thus: *Naturae rationabilis individua subsistentia*, 'the individual subsistence of rational nature.'<sup>1</sup> 'Rational nature' as a universal is not a person; nor is any individual a person whose nature is not rational. And this corresponds to our common practice in using the word. We do not call an animal a person; and though a corporation may be a person in law, and be treated accordingly as a subject of rights and duties, we feel that only with an apology should we speak of it in ordinary discourse as a person: to call it so without qualification would be felt to be strange and pedantic. Moreover, if in the earlier stages of civilization it is not the individual but the community to which he belongs that is primarily thought of as the subject of rights and duties, it is just the development which transfers this position to the member of the community that is meant when we speak of Personality as

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, c. 3.

a late discovery. For so long as personality is found, not mainly in the individual but rather in the community, so long 'personality' in our sense—'the individual subsistence of a rational nature'—is not adequately recognized. On the other hand, so long as it is found in certain selected individuals, such as a prince who, as in Hobbes's theory, absorbs the personality of all his subjects, or a priest who is the 'parson' or *persona* of the parish over which he presides, so long there is an inadequate recognition of the individual subsistence of a *rational* nature in the multitude of which these are the selected representatives. The ordinary members of the multitude are so far regarded as *mere* individuals, not properly *persons* in their own right, but only as such in and through their representatives.

Now so far as, when we speak of Personality, it is of the rational nature which distinguishes persons from things that we are mainly thinking, so far it would be, I think, quite erroneous to assert that classical antiquity came behind the mediaeval or the modern world in the recognition of this rational nature as the grand characteristic of the Mind or Spirit to which such a philosophy as Plato's is concerned to ascribe the supremacy in the real world. The complaints often nowadays made of the 'intellectualism' of ancient Greek philosophy, ill-defined and misleading as they often are, at least witness to this, that whatever else the Spirit might be to which Plato ascribed supremacy among real beings, it was at any rate rational. But it is when we speak of Personality with reference to the individual subsistence which differentiates a person from a *universal* of any sort, that we are conscious of a certain indifference in the ancients to what is apt to seem to us of crucial importance. The notorious difficulty which any one will find who attempts the task seriously, in answering the questions whether Plato held God to be personal or the individual soul to be immortal, will illustrate what I mean.



Those who would say that he did not regard such matters as of any philosophical significance at all are very likely right. It may, indeed, be plausibly argued that, not only in Plato's judgement, but also in truth, they are of no philosophical significance. Still it must be admitted that in the Middle Ages or in our own day it would be impossible not, at any rate, to recognize the inevitableness even if not the reasonableness of such questions being asked with an insistence which is grounded in the far greater import to us of this 'individual subsistence of a rational nature'. It is because of this greater import to us of what we usually mean by 'individual personality' that we wish to know both whether God's nature subsists in such a way at all, and again whether the rational nature in ourselves so subsists, namely, not as some individual but as this or that individual, yourself or myself, for a few years only, or for ever. We commonly ask this, indeed, not so much because we can be said to want to go on for ever, but because we tend to claim for *this* 'individual subsistence of the rational nature' which I call my own personality, an import beyond that of a mere instance of its universal, the rational nature. And where modern philosophy aims at being faithful to the Platonic tradition, it will sometimes be found (as, for example, recently among ourselves in Mr. Bosanquet's Gifford Lectures on *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*) attempting to show that belief in the continuance of the individual's life after death is not the only form in which the unique value of the individual person can be adequately recognized. But it is, of course, quite admitted by Mr. Bosanquet, as the title of his Lectures shows, that the question of the significance of the person, you or me, as more than a mere instance of the rational nature which subsists individually but diversely in you and in me is itself one of great importance and urgency.

Now I think it may be said without fear of contradiction

that this development of the sense of individual personality between the time of Plato and that of Anselm owed much to the enrichment of individual religious experience which was due to the Christian religion. The *Confessions* of Augustine is a book which has no prototype in classical antiquity. It is, no doubt, quite true that for the language which he uses to express that intimate intercourse with a divine Friend which is so familiar a feature of Christian experience, Augustine is not a little indebted to Plotinus. But on the one hand Plotinus himself is distinguished from Plato as the child not of classical antiquity but of an age which sought in God rather the Saviour of the individual soul than the patron of the State or even of the mystic brotherhood, by the vein of thought expressed in that famous saying about the flight of the Alone to the Alone,<sup>1</sup> which found so many echoes not in Augustine only but in Christian mysticism generally. And on the other hand, the tone of Augustine's intimate piety towards a concrete and personal God is so different even from Plotinus' aspiration after the transcendence of all difference, and his desire to lose himself in the supreme Unity which lay beyond even the distinction of a perfect Intelligence from its perfectly Intelligible Object, that it is not at first without surprise that one comes to recognize how much, despite this difference of tone, the language of the Christian doctor owes to that of the Neo-Platonic philosopher. I am conscious that I have rather indicated than adequately described the first important modification which what I may call the Platonic tradition had undergone in the course of transmission to the man of the Middle Ages. For the present, however, it must suffice, without further elaboration, to repeat that the note of personality was now characteristic of the conception of Spirit as it had not been in classical antiquity, or to put it in another way, suggested by the Boethian definition, there

<sup>1</sup> *Enn.* vi. 9, § 11.

was a new stress laid upon the fact that the rational nature, whose supremacy over irrational nature Plato had striven to indicate, must have an 'individual subsistence'. And the new stress upon this fact was chiefly traceable to a new religious experience, the experience of the individual's personal converse with God. I have elsewhere<sup>1</sup> endeavoured to show that what is meant by the Personality of God as a religious doctrine is the possibility of such personal intercourse, and not merely the speculative assertion that God is an 'individual centre of consciousness'; and I have contended that that is why we should certainly hesitate to say that Aristotle, although he held that God was an individual conscious being, taught the Personality of God. For Aristotle's principles excluded the possibility of any communion between the human soul and this supreme Being in his self-sufficing perfection.

The second point to which I called attention in reference to the situation in the Middle Ages as compared with that in the days of Plato was this : that, while the Middle Ages still stood nearer to Plato's confidence in reason than to Kant's criticism of it, yet the movement which issued in the Kantian criticism and its resultant phenomenalism was already begun, and moreover that the existence of such a movement is proved by the formulation in Anselm's *Proslogion* of that very Ontological Argument which stands as the central fortress of the position against which the Kantian attack was directed. I added that the antique confidence in reason would be found not to have been unaffected by the general acknowledgement of certain dogmas as supernaturally revealed which were, at least, in the first place to be believed upon authority and, though they might indeed be rationally defended, yet were in no case to be rejected. The philosophy of Plato is often called Idealism, and it might seem as if no one's philosophy had a better right to the name than that of the man who

<sup>1</sup> *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 220. "

taught men to use the word Idea as the name for what in the Universe is most real and most fundamental. Yet, in the sense which Idealism usually bears in modern philosophical discussion, Plato's philosophy was quite other than Idealism. For Idealism nowadays most often denotes a way of thinking which finds, with Descartes, the bedrock of certainty in the individual's consciousness of self, and, with Locke, the ultimate constituents of knowledge in objects of sense perception regarded as, at any rate primarily, affections of the individual. Sometimes, with Berkeley, it supposes that the very *esse* of what we call the external world is *percipi*, so that the objects of our perceptions are no more than affections of our individual minds. Sometimes it holds, with others, that we can infer from these immediate objects some other reality behind them of which they are somehow representative; and perhaps even Berkeley himself did this, so far as he recognized in the 'ideas' the words of a divine language. But in any sense of this kind the word Idealism is not applicable to the philosophy of Plato. The Platonic 'ideas' were not, like Locke's or Berkeley's or indeed those of most psychologists of to-day, 'mental facts', but independent realities, the objects of knowledge and not part of the machinery of knowing. Indeed, the recognition, with whatever variations, that knowledge presupposes as its object an independent reality—a reality, that is, which exists independently of the act in which or by which it is known—is common to all European philosophies from Plato down to Descartes. For it was Descartes that with his *Cogito ergo sum* originated the subjectivist trend which has marked so much of modern thought and which culminates in the Kantian criticism. But the *Cogito ergo sum* was not, of course, like Melchizedek 'without father and without mother'. In it there came to birth, as it were, a new emphasis on the individual self-consciousness, which was, as we have seen, the offspring of the marriage of the antique spiritualism

with the Christian religion. It was no mere accident that, as was pointed out to Descartes by a correspondent,<sup>1</sup> the germ of this principle with which his name is for ever associated, is to be found in St. Augustine. During the period in which Western Europe was, as it were, at school under her ancient masters, the human mind could still be regarded only as the ancients had regarded it, as one of the many things which existed in the world; yet under the influence of the Christian religion it had come to be regarded as not only that one of those many things which was most especially interesting to us, but as that which was objectively of highest worth; for the sake of which everything else (except any higher minds that there might be) had come into existence at all. It is obviously not possible here so to elaborate this theme as to avoid all possible chances of misconception. I have not overlooked many considerations by which this account would have to be qualified before it could be taken as a complete account of the course of philosophical development. But we cannot but observe that in much modern philosophy as compared with ancient we find a different line of approach to the problems of philosophy which makes it often a matter of some difficulty to a student of ancient philosophy to realize that when a Greek speaks of *νοητά*, 'things conceived or known', he no more means *νοήματα*, 'conceptions', or *νοήσεις*, 'acts of knowing', than when he speaks of *αἰσθητά*, 'things perceived', he means 'acts of perceiving'. And I do not think it can be reasonably questioned that one of the causes which brought it about that this different line of approach came to be taken was the stress laid by the Christian religion on the importance to the individual of his own individual soul, and its intimate relation to God in self-examination, penitence, prayer and meditation, in the whole drama, that is, of the inner life of the religious Christian.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 55.



The so-called Ontological Argument which is associated with the name of Anselm, the earliest in date of the mediaeval thinkers whom I have selected for special notice, will be more fully considered when I come to speak of him. But it is important for my present purpose to remind you of what this Argument is, and to indicate the fact that its formulation illustrates better than anything else the transitional character of mediaeval thought. We see here how the subjectivity which was to dominate philosophy at a later epoch was already shaping itself within the body of the antique system of thought, characterized as it was throughout by what Kant would have called Dogmatism, but what we may perhaps, to avoid the implication of hostility which that word conveys, describe as Objectivity.

By the Ontological Argument is meant the inference to the existence or reality of God from the very presence in our minds of the thought of God. It is not, of course, though its critics from Anselm's contemporary Gaunilo down to Kant have tended so to represent it, the assertion that whatever we can imagine must forthwith be held to exist *in rerum natura*. It is rather the expression of the conviction that though we may wrongly combine or disjoin in imagination the objects of thought, may fancy that to be actual which is only possible, or the like, yet in the last resort a thought must always be the thought of something real and thought be describable as the apprehension of reality; and that this can only be denied by a complete scepticism. A complete scepticism may treat the only means which we have for apprehending reality as though correspondence with reality were something quite separate from their nature, as though we could study thought in abstraction from reality, and then inquire whether it corresponds with it or no. On this side just what the Ontological Argument expresses is the objectivity of attitude inherited by the Middle Ages from antiquity; and it is as such, as the very heart of 'dogmatism', that Kant,

in the interests of a critical doubt, which would test the instrument of knowledge before using it, assails that Argument with peculiar vehemence. On the other hand, the formulation of the Ontological Argument by Anselm puts this conviction from the subjective side. While thought is naïvely objective and does not question its own function, the Ontological Argument is not formulated as an argument ; what it contains is taken for granted. The very formulation indicates an incipient doubt. And, though itself the expression of an objective attitude, it is formulated in a subjective way. Hence the constant misunderstanding of its inner nature ; it seems to pass from subjectivity to objectivity, from thought as a psychological fact to apprehension of reality, by a kind of conjuring trick or miracle ; it seems to treat thought as a merely subjective fact in the very act of claiming for it that function of apprehending Reality which makes it impossible ever satisfactorily so to treat it. The whole history of the Argument will be found to bear out this account of it as the very turning-point of Western speculation, at which on the threshold of subjectivism it endeavours to secure for thought that status, if I may so put it, as the apprehension of reality, the justice of its claim to which it was beginning to suspect. The germ of the Ontological Argument, like that of the *Cogito ergo sum*, is traceable in Augustine, that great pioneer of the introspection which is apt to breed subjectivism. It met with little acceptance in the heyday of Scholasticism, during which the antique tradition had been powerfully reinforced by the influence of Aristotle ; but was revived at the inauguration of modern philosophy by Descartes, by whose *Cogito ergo sum* was given the main impulse to the subjectivist tendency which was to prove so influential in later thought. To Descartes it was recommended by its subjectivist form ; it remained for Kant to pierce to its true significance and to see in it the real citadel of what he called ' dogmatism ', to be overthrown in the

interests of what, from our point of view, was subjectivism, though Kant would not have owned that it deserved the name. Lastly Hegel, in his revolt from Kantian subjectivism quite naturally found himself led to rehabilitate the Ontological Argument as expressing that fundamental unity of thought and reality which the Kantian criticism had striven to break up. That it expressed it from the subjective side, as it were, would not recommend it the less to Hegel; for his own philosophy was expressed from that side also; as was indeed natural, if we consider its historical position as the culmination of a development whose starting-point was Kant.

Now a tendency towards subjectivism is always apt to connect itself with a tendency to lose sight of such essential differences as that between Knowledge and Opinion which is so prominent in Plato; or that between 'thinking' or 'reasoning' on the one hand and 'imagining' on the other. The objective reference which distinguishes Reason from other mental processes is blurred when attention is concentrated on the common character of mental process which it shares with them. And hence the tendency to subjectivism which distinguishes modern from ancient philosophy is associated with a prevalence of doubt respecting the validity of Reason. Such doubt was by no means, indeed, unknown to the ancients but attains much greater consistency and importance among the moderns. It is, however, as I have said, probable that certain circumstances connected with the history of the transmission of the tradition of philosophy were not without an influence in encouraging the tendency to doubt the validity of reason. For, in the first place, the tradition had now been transmitted to peoples among whom a passion for knowledge, for its own sake, was less conspicuously a native characteristic. In the next place, these peoples had obtained their inheritance of classical culture, such as it was, not as something won by the exercise of their own intellectual faculties, but as part of an authoritative

bequest from the past, along with a religious doctrine which purported to be revealed from above, and that not to the wise and prudent, but to babes,<sup>1</sup> so that even the wise and prudent could only receive it by themselves entering the kingdom of heaven as little children.<sup>2</sup> Although the bondage of mediaeval philosophy to dogma is usually exaggerated, it is not to be supposed that this attitude towards authority, to which there is so little (I do not say that there is nothing) that is comparable in classical antiquity, made no difference. It certainly tended to encourage doubt of the validity of reason; although this tendency was, no doubt, checked in the mediaeval schools, like the general drift towards subjectivism, by the dominant authority of a philosophy so rationalistic and realistic as that of Aristotle.

I come, thirdly and lastly among these preliminary subjects of consideration, to the Platonic doctrine of the divinity of the sun, moon, and stars. This was a *damnosa hereditas* from the Academy and Lyceum (for Aristotle shared his master's veneration for the heavenly bodies) both to the science and theology of later days. Its baneful influence on astronomical science is recognized. It is known to have created a prejudice against the reception of discoveries tending to discredit the supposed perfect sphericity, crystalline substance and circularity of orbit of the heavenly bodies. But we are here more nearly concerned with its effect on theology. As I pointed out when dealing with Plato's Natural Theology, Plato himself regarded the belief as a bulwark against Naturalism. But it eventually proved quite the reverse. We know, of course, that it could not have stood the test of the facts revealed by the telescope and spectroscope. But before it was brought to any such test, it proved actually capable of affording to Naturalism an opportunity of presenting itself in an attractive if not an appropriate dress. To the Middle Ages and Renaissance

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 15.

the view which Plato reckoned as the grand enemy of the true philosophy, the view that a non-moral necessity ultimately governs the course of human life, was known mainly in the form of astrology, that is of a belief in the influence of the heavenly bodies as determining from first to last the characters and actions of men. It would, of course, be ridiculous to regard the veneration of the heavenly bodies in the Middle Ages as merely the result of the teaching of Plato and Aristotle. Such veneration is almost instinctively paid by man when, in the words of the book of Job,<sup>1</sup> he beholds the sun when it shineth or the moon walking in brightness. His 'heart is secretly enticed and his mouth kisses his hand'. It was, indeed, the ground of Plato's and Aristotle's respect for such veneration that they conceived it to be the natural religion of mankind. But it may, I think, be said with truth that the great development in the later Roman Empire of religious devotion to the heavenly bodies and in particular to the Sun, which left a certain kind of Sun-worship the real rival to Christianity at the last, and the history of which has recently been so strikingly elucidated by the researches of M. Cumont, derived at least considerable encouragement among the cultivated classes from the philosophical patronage which it could claim. We may say, too, that in the same way, up to the dawn of modern science, the respect which the teaching of Plato and Aristotle won for a notion of the heavenly bodies as belonging to a world more exalted, more orderly, more rational than that in which our lot is cast weakened, to a greater extent than we usually suspect, the resistance of the Christian principle in theology which finds the true image of God not in the brightest of luminaries, but in the best of men, alike to a nascent Naturalism and to the superstitious astrology which was sometimes strangely allied with it.

<sup>1</sup> xxxi. 26, 27.



Of this third and last of our three preliminary observations we shall not, however, be reminded while dealing with our first two thinkers, Anselm and Abelard ; and the reason of this lies precisely in the fact that the veneration of the heavenly bodies, which has no place in Christianity, was far less important prior to the recovery of the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* and *De Caelo* and the circulation of the Arabian commentaries thereon, the authority of which gave it after the twelfth century a new sanction and encouragement.

## II

### ANSELM

IN the year 1752 Thomas Herring, Archbishop of Canterbury, was astonished at what seemed to him the fantastic suggestion proposed by the Minister at the Court of St. James of the King of Sardinia, Charles Emmanuel—the ‘King Charles’ of Browning’s drama—that (for a consideration) the remains of St. Anselm should be removed from Canterbury to his native land of Piedmont. There was nothing really surprising in the wish of the Piedmontese sovereign. Anselm was a canonized saint, born in his territory, and, indeed, connected through his mother with his own illustrious house, yet his relics lay unvenerated among heretics. Archbishop Herring was surprised at the request, because he could not enter into the frame of mind which prompted it. But he had no objections to complying with it. ‘You will believe,’ he wrote to the Dean of his Cathedral, ‘I have no great scruples on this Head, but if I had I would get rid of them all if the parting with the rotten Remains of a Rebel to his King, a Slave to the Popedom and an Enemy to the married Clergy (all this Anselm was) would purchase Ease and Indulgence to one living Protestant. It is believed that a Condescension in this Business may facilitate the way of doing it to thousands. I think it is worth the Experiment, and really for this End I should make no Conscience of palming on the Simpletons any other old Bishop with the name of Anselm.’<sup>1</sup> The suggestion, however, came to nothing, purely it would seem from the not unnatural fear of the canons that the neglected state of the crypt of their great church (a horrible account of which may be found

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Var. Coll.* I. 1901 (pp. 226 ff).

in Hasted's *History of Kent*, published just at that time) would make them cut but a discreditable figure in the eyes of foreigners invited to search there for the remains of the philosopher-saint. Archbishop Herring, who esteemed so slightly the greatest thinker that ever adorned the throne of Canterbury, was himself a man of no intellectual mark, and was even in his own day distinguished rather for assiduous performance of his pastoral duties than for any contributions to sacred learning or science. But by an odd chance his name has a place in the history of English letters, from the circumstance mentioned by David Hume in his Autobiography, that when Whig and Tory alike fell upon his history of England in the days of the Stuarts, because he attempted to treat his subject in the spirit of impartiality, the chorus of dispraise was broken by two letters of encouragement, both from unexpected quarters: one from Archbishop Herring, and one from his brother Primate, Dr. Stone, Archbishop of Armagh.

It would probably have greatly surprised Archbishop Herring had he been told that in Britain there had arisen no greater metaphysician than these two; one the predecessor whose dust he was so ready to barter for foreign gold, and the other the Edinburgh essayist of dubious orthodoxy whose historical enterprise he so kindly encouraged. Yet at that very time there was in Königsberg a young aspirant to professorial honours, who, impelled by the study of Herring's Scottish correspondent, was to make an epoch in philosophy by his assault on a position the heart and citadel of which he recognized as being the famous Ontological Argument first formulated by Herring's despised predecessor.

Anselm is now far more generally known than in Herring's day, and long after Herring's day, to those interested in philosophical and theological questions; and it would be out of place to relate the story of his life which was so excellently told in Latin by his devoted disciple Eadmer, and which has

been often retold in later days, for instance in the book by the late Dean Church which bears his name. He was not by birth an Englishman but a Piedmontese, born in what was then the Burgundian town of Aosta or, as Archbishop Herring calls it, Oost; he crossed the Alps while still a young man, and found a resting-place in the famous Abbey of Bec, where he eventually succeeded as abbot his celebrated predecessor Lanfranc, when William the Conqueror carried the latter across the Channel to be Archbishop of Canterbury. His visits to England, where his monastery had estates, won him general respect there; and William Rufus, who, after keeping the metropolitan see vacant after Lanfranc's death in order to enjoy the revenues, once when taken ill and seized with a panic of remorse, forced the archiepiscopal dignity upon the unwilling Anselm, who chanced to be at the time in the country. His tenure of this high office was not a peaceful one. His relations with the King fulfilled his own anticipation that he would be 'like an old sheep yoked with a furious bull'. His obstinate loyalty to the Roman See, which stood to him, as to most of the nobler spirits of his age in this part of the world, for the ideal of an authority not local but universal, based not on force but on the moral law of God, led to a prolonged exile, which only ended with the death of William and the accession of Henry I, and was soon to be renewed under the new King; though at last a compromise was reached on the question of investitures (which was the point immediately at issue), and the Archbishop died in his cathedral city and was buried in his cathedral church at the age of 76 in the year 1109.

I have already intimated that we shall not find in Anselm a sharp distinction—or indeed any distinction at all—drawn between the spheres of Natural and Revealed Theology. Modern Roman Catholic writers, for whom the distinction established by St. Thomas Aquinas is authoritative, sometimes find themselves obliged to apologize for St. Anselm's

inattention to it. No doubt the reason for it is to some extent historical. The intimacy of the later schoolmen with the doctrines of Aristotle least capable of reconciliation with Christian dogma (such as that of the eternity of the world) as also with the writings of the Mohammedan commentators, forced upon their attention the fact of the diversity of creeds and the consequent question whether there was not a common stock of knowledge concerning things divine independent of this diversity. There was nothing in Anselm's studies to force this question upon him. The non-Christian writers with whom he may have been acquainted all belonged to a remote past, and none of them possessed for him the authority with which Aristotle was invested for the schoolmen of the thirteenth century. Of Aristotle himself only some of the logical treatises were then available, of Plato only the *Timaeus* in Chalcidius' translation. In the *Timaeus* a creation of the world is described, and a well-established tradition to which Augustine had lent his authority found in its doctrine of the supreme God, the only-begotten Universe, and the World-Soul, an anticipation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. But, if Anselm's attitude was thus in part due to his more restricted range of knowledge, it was on the whole a more satisfactory one than that of his more learned successors in the great age of mediaeval philosophy. It has often, however, been misunderstood, and that from two opposite points of view. On the one hand, as I have said, adherents of the later scholastic systems blame him for attempting to develop the doctrine of the Trinity as a consequence of general principles of reason without ostensible reference to revelation; on the other hand, writers of a different tendency have often seen in his famous maxim *Credo ut intelligam*<sup>1</sup> the very *locus classicus* of a tied philosophy, based not on free thought but on acceptance of an authoritative dogma.

<sup>1</sup> *Proslogion*, c. 1.



To me I confess that Anselm seems to have conceived the true nature of the Philosophy of Religion better than either party of his critics. The Philosophy of Religion can no more exist *in vacuo* than the Philosophy of Nature or the Philosophy of Art. There must be a material of religious experience, and this must for the most part be gained in the first instance by assimilation of the corporate experience of the religious community into which the philosopher is born; that is, in Anselm's phrase, by faith. Even when, as was not possible for Anselm, the religious experience which the philosopher seeks to understand is not only that of his own religious community, but also that of others, which he compares and contrasts with that of his own, it can only be made available for his purpose through such a sympathetic appreciation of what the experience of faith within such another community would be as is only to be looked for where the thinker knows in his own person what faith is within his own. The wrong turn is taken, however, when instead of attempting such sympathetic appreciation, the original experience is marked off, under the name of Revealed Religion, from the experience of others, which is taken to be either 'natural' religion or false religion. This wrong turn, as I conceive it to be, is not taken by Anselm; no doubt, as no other religion than that which he took to be revealed actually came in his way, he was not tempted to take it. But in the absence of the temptation he pointed to what, in my judgment, is a more excellent way, by seeking to discover in the content which faith gave him a rational connexion with principles which were, or seemed to him to be, on grounds of reason indisputable. I have said that no other religion than that which he took to be revealed came in his way. An exception may no doubt be suggested. Of Judaism as a faith actually professed he certainly had some knowledge. His sovereign and antagonist, William Rufus, encouraged discussions between Jews and Christians and swore to

become a Jew if the Jews got the better.<sup>1</sup> But the controversy between Jew and Christian Anselm would probably have envisaged—like his disciple Gilbert Crispin, the fourth Abbot of Westminster, who has left us a dialogue between a Jew and a Christian,<sup>2</sup> based on real discussions of his own with a Jewish friend—as a dispute concerning the true interpretation of prophetic Scriptures which they both acknowledged as imparting divine revelation, and of which the one saw a fulfilment where the other did not.

Of the writings left us by Anselm there are two which concern us. These, with that love of Greek names—or what they took to be Greek names—which we find pathetically prevalent in a generation of scholars to whom a genuine knowledge of Greek was inaccessible, he called respectively the *Monologion*<sup>3</sup> or Soliloquy and the *Proslogion* or Address, that is, to God. I will attempt to give in outline the contents of these works. The second named is the more famous of the two, as containing the formulation of the so-called Ontological Proof of the Existence of God, but forms a sequel to the first named, which indeed its argument presupposes in a way hereafter to be pointed out. Of the *Monologion* Anselm's friend and biographer, Eadmer, says, 'It is a soliloquy in which, without any reference to the authority of the inspired Scriptures, he reaches by means of reason alone an answer to the question, what God is; proving and establishing by irrefragable arguments that which the true religion holds concerning him.' This puts shortly the design which Anselm himself expresses more at length in his own preface to the book in question.

At the outset of the treatise Anselm claims to have reached results thoroughly in accord with the teaching of Augustine's great work on the Trinity. Whatsoever influence, however, this teaching may have exerted from the first over Anselm's

<sup>1</sup> Eadmer, *Hist. Nov.* s. a. 1098, ed. Rule p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Migne, *Patrol. Lat.* clix. 1005 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Or *Monologium*.

speculation, it would be quite incorrect to regard Anselm as having merely reproduced it. Even where he has it obviously in view he does not follow it in a slavish manner ; nor is he even a mere commentator upon it. The Augustinian doctrine and the Platonism which lay behind it Anselm had assimilated, and had thought out his theme for himself in a thorough manner. There must be (so he begins) a *Summum Bonum* or Chief Good, by possession of which alone all other good things are entitled to be so called, whether they be *utilia* or *honestia*. This *Summum Bonum* is *bonum per se*, good in its own right ; and that which is *summe bonum* must also be *summe magnum*. For the same reasoning as shows that there is something *summe bonum* which is good *per se*, shows that there must also be a *summe magnum* which is *magnum per se* ; not spatially, as a body, but in the sense in which *quod quanto majus tanto melius est aut dignius* ; that is, the greater a thing is, so much the better or worthier, as is the case for example with wisdom ; now in this sense what is *summe magnum*, supremely great, must be also *summe bonum*, supremely good, and that which is both is *summum omnium*, absolutely supreme.

It is obvious that there underlies this argument the fact in which the Platonic doctrine usually called the theory of Ideas takes its rise ; namely, that the use of a common predicate (such as *good*) in a number of different cases can only be justified if it refers to an identical nature which is exhibited in all these cases. Nor can we significantly apply the predicate in any case unless we know (whether or not we can state) what this identical nature is which we recognize in this particular instance. Even if we are at odds with some one else as to whether the predicate is applicable, the dispute itself has no point unless we *both* know what that is which *I* think I recognize here and *you* think is not here, so that *I*, in thinking it is, am in fact mistaking something else for it. Readers of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* will

remember his argument<sup>1</sup> against the view that 'good' is really a common predicate at all, in the sense of ascribing an identical nature to all things called 'good'. Of this passage Anselm was doubtless ignorant; and Augustine, in the passage<sup>2</sup> which probably suggested the discussion in the *Monologion*, had taken no notice of it. But Aristotle himself did not deny that, although *good* could not be supposed to predicate an identical nature of substances and accidents, of quantities and qualities, even when it was used as a predicate of all these, yet it would be possible to predicate it of that which we take to possess most perfectly the kind of nature which belongs to that kind of being to which we are applying it, whether it be substance or attribute of whatever sort; and so, among substances or real beings, of God. And this would be enough for Anselm's purpose here. For this implies that what modern writers call 'judgements of value', that is of intrinsic value, can be made; and I think it will be found that judgements of intrinsic value are always made, as a matter of fact, even by those who hesitate to affirm as a general principle the legitimacy of them. The argument of the first chapter of Anselm's *Monologion* speaks, it will be observed, not only of a *summe bonum*, but also of a *summe magnum*. Such a conception, if taken literally, that is of extension in space, is impossible; for we cannot conceive space except as infinite. But Anselm is at pains to deny that magnitude in the literal or spatial sense is intended. *Magnum* is meant (he tells us) in such a sense as that in which we can say, as we may of wisdom, that the greater a thing is, the better and worthier. In other words, we seem to have goodness and the judgement of value over again. But is there here merely a tautology? Plainly he must have had something else in his mind besides that of which he had just spoken. Can we say what it was?

In our consideration of Plato's Natural Theology we saw<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *de Trin.* viii. § 14.

<sup>3</sup> p. 170.

that it not only involved, or indeed, was based upon, what we may call 'judgements of value', but also implied a conviction of the supremacy of the Good, which though it could not be classed with the knowledge of this or that, yet could still less be ranked under the head of *δόξα* or opinion. For it was not a belief that this or that was so within the real world but a faith (if we care to call it so) in the ultimate character of the real world, the disappearance of which would involve the unsettling of the very principles of *knowledge* itself. In Anselm we find the same convictions: that judgements of intrinsic value can be legitimately made; and that the Good, the knowledge of which is implied in these judgements of intrinsic value, is not only one of the features of the real world, but its fundamental nature, in which its being is grounded and in the acknowledgement of which all knowledge of it is rooted. It is, I think, these two convictions which Anselm is seeking to express in his two arguments about the *summe bonum* and the *summe magnum*. In other words, the fundamental presuppositions of his philosophy of religion are those which were the presuppositions of Plato; and the arguments which he alleges in their support express that same confidence in the reason as a genuine apprehension of reality for which he afterwards sought to find a yet more concentrated formulation in his Ontological Argument.

Nothing is, I think, really added to this thought by the argument which follows in the *Monologion* to the effect that as whatever *is*, has *being* or reality at all, must have it *per se* or *per aliud*, a similar course of reasoning to that which has already conducted us to the recognition of a *summe bonum* and of a *summe magnum*, will conduct us also to the recognition of a *summe ens*, a supreme, that is, self-existent being. Whatsoever things then are good or are great (in the sense above explained) or simply *are*, must be good or be great or simply *be* (so Anselm goes on to maintain) in virtue of some



one nature ; for if we suppose that they have these common predicates in virtue of more than one nature, these many principles of goodness, greatness, or reality, would raise the same question over again ; we should have to find some one nature in them, or if we suppose each to have the character in its own right, yet we should still be forced to hold that they all had it (since it is *ex hypothesi* one) through some one *vis vel natura existendi* ; or again, if we suppose that they owe it to one another, how is it possible to conceive one thing owing its being to that to which it gives being ? We might seem to find an instance of such mutual conditioning in the relations which give rise to what are called relative terms, such as that of master and servant. But in these cases the real subjects of these relative predicates are not *in themselves* thus reciprocally causes of one another's existence, but only *in these characters* (of master or servant, husband or wife, and so on). Don Quixote is not the cause of Sancho Panza's existence. It is only Don Quixote's knighthood that is the cause of Sancho Panza's squireship. That which alone is *per se*, exists in its own right alone, owing its existence to nothing beyond itself, that must *be* greater than anything which owes its being to it ; so too it must have goodness, greatness, and existence or reality in a supreme degree. Hence there must be a Being (*na'tura vel substantia vel essentia*) supreme in all these three ways. This very phrase suggests that the third way (the way of *being*) is not something additional to the other two ; independent or self-dependent being is already involved in independent or self-dependent goodness and greatness. Its separate statement clinches what has gone before, but may mislead by an apparent isolation of *being* as a predicate which may or may not be ascribed to that of which we think. But this is anticipating what will perhaps be more appropriately said when we come to the *Proslogion* and the Ontological Argument. For the present we have only to

observe Anselm's insistence in the *Monologion* on the implication in all our knowledge of a reality, which is the object and therefore not the creature of our apprehension, and which must possess in its fullness what we find only imperfectly present in each particular taken by itself; since we could not miss that of which we are in no way cognizant, the relativity of our knowledge thus being not (as is sometimes supposed) the disproof of, but rather the witness to, our consciousness of what later philosophers have called an 'Absolute'.

We must now follow further the argument of the *Monologion*. The world, Anselm goes on to say, exhibits a scale of natures, one above another. We must, therefore, either (1) acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Nature or (2) commit the absurdity of a *progressus ad infinitum* or (3) suppose that there are at the summit of the scale of being several equal natures, without a superior. Against this last supposition (which would nowadays be called Pluralism, and has found a good deal of favour of late in certain quarters), Anselm argues that these many must, by the same reasoning as he used above, have the excellence thus attributed to them either *per aliud*—and then this other will be superior to them—or through their own essence; but then this very essence of greatness or excellence in them will be the one supreme Nature, for *diversa quaedam*, a number of different essences, could not have made them thus perfectly equal to one another—they must have in equal degree some one essence. Hence this one supreme Being will be the supremely great, good, and real being, to the acknowledgement of which we have already been brought in another way. This Supreme Being which exists *per se*, all else existing through it (*per ipsam*), must also be *ex se* and all else *ex ipsa*; not the condition only but the source of all that is beside itself. It can have no material cause (cannot, that is, be *ex aliquo*); nor can it have an efficient cause—be, that is, *per aliquid*;

nor can it require anything else as an instrumental cause of its being. Yet we must not say it is *per nihil*. For only *nihil*, nothing, could be *per nihil*. To call the Supreme Being *nihil* would be equivalent to saying 'whatsoever is, is nothing'. In this passage Anselm repudiates language which has often had an attraction for theologians of a mystical tendency and which in the ninth century one whom we may call the earliest of mediaeval and of British philosophers, John the Scot<sup>1</sup>, had (in dependence on the writer who went by the name of Dionysius the Areopagite) deliberately used. I think it probable that Anselm did not know John the Scot's independent work; if he knew his translation of the false Areopagite, he nowhere says so. In itself this is a fact of no great significance; for Anselm is remarkable for the paucity of his references to other writers. Unlike many mediaeval writers he has no weakness for parading his learning. It is amusing in his correspondence to contrast the pedantic display of learning which characterizes the letters to him of his devoted admirer Matilda, Henry I's Queen, with the total absence of anything of the sort from his own. But one may guess that the claims of the works of the false Areopagite to apostolical authority—for Anselm can scarcely be supposed to have doubted them to be what they professed to be, the writings of a disciple and companion of St. Paul—would have weighed with him too much, had he known of them at all, for him to have thus ignored them. Hence I am disposed to hold that not only the works of John the Scot himself, but even his version of the false Areopagite, had never come in Anselm's way.

Not only, then, must we deny that the Supreme Being is *per nihil*, but also that it is *ex nihilo*; for it would, were it *ex nihilo*, be so either *per se* or *per aliud*. But it cannot be *ex nihilo per se* without making itself prior to itself; nor *ex nihilo per aliud* without making its *other* superior to

<sup>1</sup> Scotus Erigena as he is often tautologically called.

it. Thus it is *per se* and *ex se*; not that it is its own material, efficient, or instrumental cause; but as light (*lux*) may be said to shine *per ipsam* and *ex ipsa*. *Lux*, *lucere* and *lucens* are, he observes, inter-related just as *essentia*, *esse* and *ens*. But, though the Supreme Being is not to be described as *ex nihilo*, the world is made *ex nihilo* by the Supreme Being. For it must be made either *ex se* or *ex summa essentia* or *ex nihilo*. Now nothing can be the material cause of itself; and to suppose the world made out of the Supreme Being would imply that the Supreme Being was itself mutable and corruptible, like the world which is made out of it; and that would imply that the Supreme Good was not good at all. For that by which a good is changed cannot be good; yet the Supreme Good could only be changed by itself; for anterior to the existence of the world there is nothing besides itself; therefore the world is made *ex nihilo*, this being the only alternative remaining. An influential school of thinkers in our day would here detect an ancient prejudice in favour of the 'static'. Change in the good must, Anselm assumes, be change for the worse.

The world then is made *ex nihilo* or (to use an alternative phrase) *de nihilo*. But this, says Anselm, might mean any one of three things. It might mean that it was not made at all; as when a man is said to speak *de nihilo*, with the meaning that he is not speaking at all; in this sense, however, the phrase would apply to the Supreme Being, and also to the non-existent, but not to the creature. Or secondly, it might mean that it was actually made out of nothing, as though nothing were something; but this is obviously untenable. Or thirdly, that it was made, but that there was nothing out of which it was made; as when one says that a man became *dives ex paupere*, that is, he *was* poor but *is* rich. Just so the world now *is*, but once *was not*. This is what is meant by its creation out of nothing. This does not, however, exclude the pre-existence in the mind of

the Maker of a pattern or *forma* of the things before they were made ; in the case of all natural works, such a pattern must have pre-existed. Such a thought of the thing is a kind of *interior word*.<sup>1</sup> There are three kinds of speech, one of which uses sensible signs or symbols, another which thinks of these signs, though not externally exhibiting them ; and a third which does not use signs or symbols at all, but either the images or the concepts of the things themselves. For example, we may use the word 'man' ; or we may think of the word without uttering it ; or we may either *imagine* a human body or *conceive* the essence of man as 'mortal rational animal'. This third kind of word is likeliest the thing signified ; and so is the highest or best kind of word. As such then must we think of those words of the Supreme Being which were necessary to the making, and are necessary to the knowledge, of the things in the world. When we thus, however, compare the Supreme Being to an artificer, we must not forget that the Supreme Being has no need of any matter, out of which to make what it has designed ; nor are the designs themselves dependent, like those of a human artificer, on previously existent realities. For a human artificer may, indeed, make the image of an animal that never really existed in the world, but only by the process of compounding the characteristics of really existing things (as in the invention of a centaur or a chimera). Whatever the Supreme Being does, it must do *per semetipsam* ; and to the *intima locutio*, by which we have allowed that it makes what it makes, must itself be what itself is, *summa essentia*. We see whither Anselm is tending here ; and perhaps need to remind ourselves that he is not simply playing with language in order to lead up to a dogma which he believed on authority, however his traditional faith may have put him in the way of thinking on these lines. For it is quite true that, if we desire to conceive the rational ground

<sup>1</sup> This notion is doubtless suggested by Augustine, *de Trin.* xv. §§ 17f.



of the world, we must note that Reason as we know it from within, in ourselves, is self-conscious, and self-consciousness involves a distinction of thinker and thought, that is of his act of thinking. No doubt when one goes on to speak of a concept as something intermediate between, or due to a combination of, the act of thinking and the object of which we think, and call this 'concept' (or 'idea') the *immediate object*, the real object being only *mediately* apprehended, we are in the toils of an ambiguity which has haunted psychology from Aristotle's time to our own with unfortunate results. The representation of thought as an inner discourse remounts to Plato,<sup>1</sup> though no doubt it was immediately derived by Anselm from Augustine. We continue to follow Anselm's argument. The same line of reasoning which proves that all things have their being through one Supreme Being, proves that they are sustained in being by one Supreme Being ; that is by the preserving presence of that through whose creating presence they came into being. Therefore where this Supreme Being is not present, there can be nothing. Thus it fills and transcends the universe of created things, and all things are of it and through it and in it. It belongs to the supremacy of the Supreme Being that it should possess all attributes the possession of which makes their possessor absolutely better than that which does not possess them ; such as life, wisdom, power and almightiness, truth, righteousness, blessedness, eternity. These attributes may be, it is observed, ascribed to it substantially or intrinsically ; the attributes which we have previously ascribed to it are relative only. We have shown it, that is to say, to be better, greater, more real than anything else ; what it is however in itself, we have not hitherto pointed out. Inasmuch as (just as with the previously discussed *relative* attributes, so with these *substantial* ones) whatsoever is righteous (or whatever else it may be) must be so by participation in the nature of

<sup>1</sup> *Theaet.* 190 A.

righteousness (or of whatever else we are speaking).<sup>1</sup> But the Supreme Being cannot be righteous or whatever else he is except *per se*; and so must be himself righteousness and the rest; supreme being, supreme life, supreme reason, health, righteousness, wisdom, goodness, greatness, beauty, immortality, incorruptibility, blessedness, eternity, power, unity. Yet, though the Supreme Being be all these, it cannot be *composite*. Were it so, it could not be self-sufficient; for what is compounded is dependent on its parts. It is wholly, therefore, whatever it is. It is not one thing in one aspect or in one part, another in another; whatever it is, it is in its whole being; and so whatever predicates we ascribe to it, we must ascribe to it not as expressing its quality or quantity, but as expressing its essence. It cannot have either beginning or end; no beginning, because even if we were to say that it began from itself, we should thus be establishing a distinction within it, which cannot consist with its absolute simplicity; no end, because that would be incompatible with the immortality or incorruptibility which we have shown to belong to it. Again, had it an end, it must finish either voluntarily or involuntarily; but to will the perishing of the Supreme Being would be inconsistent with goodness, to perish involuntarily with supreme power; while to have either beginning or end is inconsistent with the attribute of eternity. Again, Truth admits of neither beginning nor end. We cannot, that is, conceive that it was ever not true that something would be, nor that it ever will not be true that something was; but the Supreme Being is supreme truth. To say that nothing was before or will be after this Supreme Being is only true if we mean that there was not anything before it and that there will not be anything after it. It is not true in the sense that there was a time when it was not and there was nothing; or that there

<sup>1</sup> Had Anselm known Plato's *Parmenides* he would have been less ready to speak of *participatio* here.

will be a time when it will not be and there will be nothing. The Supreme Being cannot be in any determinate place or time ; for where it is not, nothing can be ; but that place or time in which it is not is not anything. So it is in no determinate place or time, but everywhere and always, in all time and all space. It may also be shown that it is nowhere and nowhen, in no time and in no place. For it has no parts, so that it cannot have one part in one place and another in another. Nor can it be wholly in all places, for then there would be many wholes of it, each for each place. Nor can it, being eternal, admit of the distinction of past, present, and future time, of which if it were in time it must admit. And so on.

We may then inquire how the two seemingly contradictory characters of being in all time and all space, and in no time and no place, each of which we have now proved to belong to the Supreme Being, can possibly be compatible. The answer is that the expression 'being in all times and places' may signify presence to all times and places, which might, did usage permit, be more conveniently described as being *cum loco et tempore* than as being *in loco et tempore*.<sup>1</sup> In this sense we may say of the Supreme Being that it is in all times and places, not in the sense that it is comprehended by them. The expression *ubique*, 'everywhere', is a better one to use of the Supreme Being than *in omni loco*, 'in every place' ; for the words *ubi*, *ibi*, 'where', 'there', and the like are by custom used, not only in their literal acceptation, but also of objects which are not spatial, such as intellect, rationality, and soul. So too *semper*, 'always', is preferable to *in omni tempore*, 'in every time' ; for it more aptly suggests eternity, *interminabilis vita simul perfecte tota existens*, than time which lapses through past, present, and

<sup>1</sup> It was Augustine's doctrine in the eleventh book of his *Confessions*, suggested to him by Plato's *Timaeus* (38 B), that the world was created *cum tempore* not *in tempore*.

future. The Supreme Being, Anselm goes on to urge, is incapable of being affected by accidents, for relative accidents which do not affect the substance of their subject, as for example, superiority or unlikeness to others, which may be predicated of it, are not, since they in no way affect their subject, properly called accidents at all. Thus the Supreme Being is ever the same with itself substantially in all respects, and not even by accident diverse from itself. Hence when we call it Substance or anything else, it is in a widely different sense to that in which we call anything else so. For it is neither a universal substance found in many individuals nor an individual substance sharing an essence with other individuals. Yet it may be called substance, because it is real, and indeed supremely real ; and Spirit, because Spirit is higher than body, and nothing else higher than spirit ; and even individual Spirit, as admitting of no division into parts or even into substance and accidents. This Supreme Spirit alone *is*, simply, perfectly, absolutely ; created things compared with it *are not* ; yet, since they have been made out of nothing into something, it cannot be said that *omnino non sunt*. They are thus left by Anselm as Plato left the phenomenal world in the *Republic*,<sup>1</sup> between being and not being. Anselm now returns to the *locutio* or utterance or word of the Supreme Being which can be no other than the Supreme Spirit itself ; for by it the Supreme Spirit makes what it makes, and it does nothing *per aliud* ; and the Supreme Spirit does not, like man, sometimes utter its thought, sometimes leave it unuttered ; hence utterance cannot be divided here from thought, nor yet thought from the thinker. Thus the *locutio* of the Supreme Spirit is so consubstantial with the Supreme Spirit, it does not consist of many words, but is one Word ; nor, like our thoughts of things, is this Word or Thought the image of its objects, but rather their archetype ; and the liker the objects to the

<sup>1</sup> v. 478 D.

Word, the higher are they in the scale of being. Now is the existence of this Word or Thought dependent (like that of our thoughts) on the existence of created things, which are their objects? Though created things are images of it, it exists independently of them; though there were no creation, the Supreme Spirit must have thought or understanding, for we cannot suppose it without understanding of itself. The rational mind is self-creating: much more the Supreme Mind whose Image it is. Hence the Supreme Spirit must have a coeternal object: that is, think itself by a Word or Thought, or Thought coeternal with itself. This Word whereby the Creator creates himself is the same as that whereby he utters the creation: this is not derived from the substantial unity of each with the Creator. But from the consideration that the Supreme Spirit's self-creating Word (the act of self-conceptiveness) must be the formation of a perfect Similitude of the Supreme Spirit, and the Word by which it utters the creature, since it must be a substance and cannot be there (for it is on the contrary their nature-type), must be the Creator; that is, it must be that Coeternal and Consubstantial Word whereby the Supreme Spirit utters or is conscious of itself. But how can the creature which is not coeternal with the Creator, be said to be uttered by this coeternal self-creating Word? *Aquinas* answers this question by the old analogy, and hence says by *Plato*<sup>1</sup> by *Socrates*<sup>2</sup> by *Augustine*<sup>3</sup> of the work of art, which exists first as not distinct from the act in the Worker's mind before it obtains a distinct existence. So the creatures exist before they are made, in the Creator's Wisdom and Reason, not as what they are as distinct from it—mutable and perishable, but as what it is—immutable and eternal. And the nearer when made they resemble this Reason, the higher their grade of reality. All things there-

<sup>1</sup> *de Opificio Mundi*, §§ 17 ff., ed. Cohn: pp. 5 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *de Div. Qu. Es.* xlv.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 11 ff.



whether they are apart from their Creator, living things or no, are life and truth in the Supreme Spirit and therefore in his Word which is his exact Similitude and one with him. While the existence of the objects of our knowledge in themselves is a higher mode of existence than their existence in our knowledge of them—‘ in our minds ’ as we say ; it is just the reverse with the created things of which the Supreme Spirit has knowledge. Their existence in the Supreme Mind is a higher kind of existence than their existence in themselves apart from that Mind’s knowledge of them. This doctrine, which is not original with Anselm, is, I may observe in passing, of considerable importance in the history of philosophy ; for it forms the main link between the Platonic doctrine of Ideas in the form in which it was held by Augustine, which interpreted the Ideas as divine thoughts, with the modern ‘ idealism ’ which understands by idea a human thought or even a human perception. The view that the existence of things in the mind was a higher, more *real* mode of existence than their existence *in themselves*, paved the way for the very different doctrine which Anselm, as we see, was very far from accepting—probably he did not even entertain the possibility of such a notion—that their existence in the mind of a human knower was a more real existence than any which they could be supposed to possess independently of any knowing mind.

Having followed thus far the argument of the *Monologion*, I shall pass over Anselm’s further discussion of the difficulties raised by the duality of the Supreme Being and his Word, and the reconciliation of any kind of duality with so absolute a unity as subsists between them ; only remarking that no ostensible reference is made to dogmatic authority, and that even when he confesses an inability to say in what respects the Supreme Spirit and its Word are two, he does not say or imply that he says they are two in order to conform to a dogma, but because some distinction is implied in

the very process by which the recognition of the Word is reached, which implication remains despite the difficulty of developing the distinction. . So far is he from being merely in bondage to traditional language, that he raises the question, which Augustine nowhere (that I know of) raises, whether we might not as well speak of the relation of the Supreme Spirit to its Word under the figure of that of Mother to Daughter as of that of Father to Son ; and, while giving reasons for preferring the usual figure, is fully aware that one can only be preferred to the other so far as the one may be more suggestive than the other of the real relation, which is reached by the way of pure speculation.

The discussion of these difficulties over, Anselm proceeds to a further stage. Following a suggestion of Augustine's<sup>1</sup> who had regarded Memory as the fundamental characteristic of Mind conscious of itself, he says that the Father may be called Memory as the Son which is his Thought or Understanding springs from him, as man's thought from man's memory. Only what *remembers* can *understand*. But what is memory or understanding that does not end in love or hate ?<sup>2</sup> The Supreme Spirit then, as it has memory and understanding of itself, must also love itself. Only what we remember and think of can we love ; though we remember and think of many things which we do not love.

Thus the Supreme Spirit's love of itself proceeds from both its memory and its thought, that is, in the symbolical language of theology, both from the Father and from the Son. As the Father and the Son are both of them the Supreme Spirit and both are one Spirit, and because each remembers and thinks of himself and the other equally, both also love with equal love each himself and the other. If the Supreme Spirit's love be equal, as it must be, to its memory and

<sup>1</sup> *de Trin.* xi, §§ 11 seq.

<sup>2</sup> *Interest*, it may be noticed, while here fully recognized as an integral part of human thought, is represented rather as the outcome than as the presupposition of cognition.

thought and these to its essence, its love is as great as its essence. But what can thus be equal to the Supreme Spirit except the Supreme Spirit? And had there been no creation, nothing but the Supreme Spirit, Father and Son would still have loved each himself and each the other, and their love would have been what they are, supremely real, or rather Supreme Reality or Being.

More than one Supreme Being there cannot be; and thus Father, Son, and the mutual love of both, are one Supreme Being; and, by parity of reasoning, all the substantial attributes of the Supreme Spirit can be attributed to this, its interior Love. Since this love proceeds not from the relations in which the Father and the Son are several, but from their essence, wherein they are one, and as this essence is wholly in either, it proceeds wholly from the Father and from the Son, which are not two wholes but one whole. This mutual love may rightly be called in a special manner by the name *Spiritus*, the name already used both of the Father and of the Son, and also of the Godhead without reference to these distinctions within it; for expression is thus given to the truth that this love is the bond between Father and Son and is what they are. I shall not now follow Anselm further in his development of this speculative doctrine of the Trinity, but shall content myself with two remarks: first, that the issue between the Latin and Greek Churches on the subject of the procession of the Holy Spirit was to Anselm, as we may sufficiently see from what I have given of his arguments, no merely verbal controversy but one which involved a serious point of speculation. For the Greek view seemed to him to infringe the absolute unity of the divine nature. It was at a later period of his life than that to which the *Monologion* belongs that Pope Urban II at the Council of Bari in 1098 called upon him to answer the arguments of the Greeks,<sup>1</sup> which he did to the great

<sup>1</sup> Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, ii, § 47.

admiration of those present. The other observation I would make is that in his account of the Holy Spirit he deliberately avoids, for good reasons connected with his own view, the phrase 'gift' as the special characteristic of the third person of the Trinity, which Augustine had used; and so indicates in a notable way the independence and consistency of his own thought. And as I shall not pursue Anselm's Trinitarian speculation further, so I shall not detail Anselm's inference of human immortality from his doctrine of the Supreme Spirit, and will end my account of the *Monologion* by calling attention to the last chapter, in which Anselm, who has hitherto avoided the word *Deus* or God, concludes that to the Supreme Spirit, as he has shown it must be conceived, is applicable the name of God, according to its usual meaning. Whoever speaks of God, whether he hold that there is one or many, means by God a nature exalted above all that is not God, the object of honour and prayer from men. But what can be so truly the object of honour and prayer as the supremely good and supremely mighty Spirit, which is Lord and King of all? For we cannot think that the supremely good and supremely wise Omnipotence, which made all, does not govern what he made, but has left the governance of us to a less mighty and good and wise being, or to mere chance. This Supreme Being then is God and the only God, ineffably three and one. Such is the argument of Anselm's *Monologion*. I have dwelt at length upon it, because there is perhaps after it no such elaboration of speculative theology in the Middle Ages, unmarred either by a hard-and-fast distinction of Revealed and Natural Religion, or by a vain attempt to eliminate, along with reference to dogmatic authority, any use of the religious experience embodied in the tradition which must form the starting-point of any philosophical theologian's speculation. In Anselm all is genuine and above board; the starting-point of faith, the free employment of rational methods, the

absence of any use of dogmatic authority to divert or interrupt the course of speculation. The general criticism will probably occur to philosophically trained readers that under cover of constructing a doctrine of God, 'the object of honour and prayer' as he says in the last chapter, he has only constructed an Absolute, in the sense in which Mr. Bradley, for example, uses the word in his *Appearance and Reality*. We will bear this suggestion in mind in passing to the sequel to the *Monologion*, the briefer and more celebrated *Proslogion*.

The story of the origin of this book is well known, and I shall not say more of it here than that Anselm tells us himself in his preface how, after writing the long argument of the *Monologion*, he strove to find one single argument which might prove God's existence without the need of any further consideration, and how, after long being harassed by the thought and striving to put it from him, an argument such as he had sought came as it were suddenly into his head, which he set forth in his second treatise the *Proslogion* or *Alloquium*. The *Monologion* or 'Soliloquy' had been an *exemplum meditandi de ratione fidei*, 'a model of speculation on the rational connexion of what we believe'; this sequel to it was *fides quaerens intellectum*, 'belief in search of a rational justification'. It will be to our purpose to attempt to discriminate the design of Anselm in the former treatise from his design in the latter. Both, in his conception of them, presupposed 'faith'; both dispensed with reference to authority. But the former was a concatenation of many arguments, a long-drawn-out web of reasoning; the latter was to be a single sufficient argument to prove that God truly existed, and was the Supreme Good, needing nothing beside himself, while all else owed to him their being and their well-being.

Although in the body of the treatise itself Anselm regards it as able to serve as a 'short way with unbelievers', such as the Psalmist's fool who said in his heart there was no



God,<sup>1</sup> this is not the main design of it. It is rather the justification of faith already held by an argument which does not only exhibit it as legitimately to be inferred from general principles of reason (as in the *Monologion*), but as in itself evident at once and not to be denied without involving the denier in contradiction.

This argument is the celebrated Ontological Proof of the existence of God. As stated by Anselm it takes the following form. By the word God is meant *id quo nihil majus cogitari possit*,<sup>2</sup> that than which nothing greater can be conceived. The fool who says 'There is no God' understands this; he means something by God, or his speech would have no significance; and he also obviously means what the rest of the world, whose belief he denies, means by God. Hence he has in his mind or understanding 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived', although he does not understand or know that it really exists. For it is not the same *habere in intellectu* (as the atheist has God) and *intelligere esse* (which, as regards God, the atheist does not). Thus the painter who has designed a picture which he has not yet painted may be said to have the picture in his mind. Yet he does not know it to exist as yet, rather he knows that it does not yet exist. But *id quo nihil majus cogitari potest* (what we call God) cannot in this way *be in the mind* and yet not *really be* (*be in intellectu* and not *in re*); for then it would be possible to think a greater than it, namely, this same object as actually existing. Hence to say *id quo nihil majus cogitari potest* is *in intellectu* only is a contradiction. Being *in intellectu*, as it is even for the atheist, since else his denial of its existence would be meaningless, it must also be *in re*, which the atheist denies. Hence atheism is self-contradictory. If we ask how then the fool can even say in his heart 'There is no God'; since to do so he must think

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xiv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase is probably modelled on Augustine's language in such passages as *de Moribus Manichaeorum*, II, § 24, *de Doctrina Christiana*, i. 7, § 7, *de Libero Arbitrio*, ii. 6, § 14.

what the argument has shown to be unthinkable; the answer of Anselm is that we must distinguish two ways in which a thing is thought or in the Psalmist's phrase 'said in the heart', by thinking of the *word* which denotes it and by thinking of the *thing* denoted. In the former way the non-existence of God is thinkable, but in the latter way not. We need not follow Anselm into his development of the nature of *id quo majus cogitari nequit*. He contends that what alone could correspond to that description must be *id quod summum omnium existens per seipsum omnia alia fecit de nihilo*. For whatever is not this is less than can be conceived. Nor to the Supreme Good can any good be lacking; whatever it is better to be than not to be, that the Supreme Good must be. The rest is on the lines of the *Monologion*, and it is only necessary to note the important remark (which does not occur in the *Monologion*) that God must be not only 'that than which no greater can be thought', but also 'something greater than can be thought'. For as we can conceive something which thus transcends thought, did not God thus transcend it, he would not be that than which no greater can be conceived.

I have myself so often discussed in other places this famous argument of Anselm's,<sup>1</sup> that I may perhaps excuse myself from saying more of it now than seems to throw light on the history of the view taken in the Middle Ages of Natural or Rational Theology. The account of Anselm's statement of the argument, however, is hardly complete without some description of Gaunilo's (or Guanilo's) criticism and Anselm's rejoinder. It is a curious coincidence that Anselm should have treated the observations of Gaunilo just as Descartes, more than five centuries later, treated the animadversions of his contemporaries upon his *Meditations*,

<sup>1</sup> In the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* for 1896; in the notes of a little book of translations called *Devotions of St. Anselm* (Methuen, 1903); and more recently in *Problems in the Relations of God and Man* (Nisbet, 1912).

in which he revived this very Ontological Argument of Anselm's. Descartes collected them, and published them along with the book to which they related, and his own replies as *Objectiones et Responsiones*. Just so did Anselm cause Gaunilo's treatise to be subjoined to his own *Proslogion* and to Gaunilo's treatise again his own reply to it. The acute treatment of the *Proslogion* which has immortalized the name of this otherwise unknown thinker, who was lord of Martigny, treasurer of St. Martin of Tours, and eventually monk of Marmoutiers near that city,<sup>1</sup> bears the title *Liber pro Insuperante*. It is an Apology, that is, for the Fool in the Psalms, whom Anselm has sought to convict of contradicting himself in his very assertion of atheism. After stating Anselm's argument he proceeds thus. We are said *habere in intellectu* 'to have in mind' whatever we understand when another mentions it. Can we not thus 'have in mind' (*habere in intellectu*) what is false or non-existent, when we understand what he says who speaks of such? A distinction may perhaps be drawn, however, between *thinking* (*cogitare*) and *understanding* (*intelligere*); so that there may be something of which we may be unable to *think* without *understanding* it or knowing it to be real. But if this be so, three difficulties will remain. In the first place *habere rem in intellectu* and *intelligere rem esse* will not be two successive acts but one and the same, whereas Anselm makes the former attributable to the painter *before*, the other only *after*, the actual painting of his picture. In the second place, can we, even of *id quo majus cogitari nequit*, believe that on the bare mention of its name its non-existence is really unthinkable? And what need in that case of all this reasoning against him who denies or doubts its existence, denial and doubt of which are really on this supposition impossible? In the third place, the existence of any such thing must be proved to me by an argument; but the argument alleged by Anselm—that the

<sup>1</sup> See Martène's account of him in the *Hist. de Marmoutiers*, pp. 363 ff.

conviction of its existence necessarily follows from the thought of it—will not prove it (says Gaunilo) to me. For there are many statements doubtful or even false which I, notwithstanding, suppose myself to understand, and may even believe to be true. Nor does Anselm's instance of the painter help us. For thinking of, and so 'having in the understanding' an external thing, an object other than the mind which conceives it, is quite a different matter from the painter's conception or design of the picture he has not yet painted, where, as St. Augustine says, it is in his mind as a part of his understanding or knowledge, not as something distinct from these, an external object. Again, how can I 'think of' or 'have in my understanding' when I hear it 'that than which no greater can be conceived', or God? For the expression 'God' really presents no more difficulty than Anselm's phrase 'that than which no greater can be conceived', although Anselm thinks that it can more readily be proved impossible to deny real existence to 'that than which no greater can be conceived' than to 'God' under that more familiar name. I cannot form a conception of it, either from independent knowledge of the very thing itself or (as in the case of a man I do not know) from independent knowledge of the kind of thing, though not of this particular instance. For I do not know what God is, nor can conjecture from my knowledge of what is like him, since, as Anselm himself confesses, there is nothing like him. I can think of a man whom I do not know when another speaks of him by the help of the specific or general notion of a man which I already possess; and yet, if my interlocutor be lying, there may actually be no such man as he speaks of. But of the Supreme Nature I can only think by way of trying to make out the meaning of the words used. (It will be remembered that Anselm allowed that, if by thinking of God we mean only thinking of the *word*, in this sense the non-existence of God is thinkable.) Nor—so Gaunilo continues

—can I be expected to admit the argument that ‘that than which no greater can be conceived’ cannot be supposed to be *in intellectu* only and not also *in re*. For I deny that this thing ‘than which no greater can be conceived’ is greater than any real thing; and I deny also that I have it *in intellectu* at all, except in the sense of trying to make out a meaning for its name. So the agreement between us which is presupposed in the use of the argument does not exist. I do not admit that ‘that than which no greater can be conceived’, which I may be said (in the sense described) to ‘have in my understanding’, is greater than all. The *existence* of this thing must be proved to me before I can be convinced of its *self-existence*. A man might speak to me of the fabulous ‘Lost Island’, which is said to be so far more excellent in every way than any other place, and because I understood what he said, might then go on to argue that I must admit the real existence of this island, or else must admit that some other land is more excellent than that which I had already ‘understood’ to be more excellent than any. If any one took this line, I should either suppose him to be jesting, or I should doubt whether he or I, were I to assent to his reasoning, would be the greater fool—I in admitting his argument or he in using it. I know most certainly that I exist and yet I know that it is possible that I should not exist. But it is doubtful whether I can think that I do not exist so long as I know that I do. If I can, why should I not also be able to think that God does not exist, although I know that he does? And if I cannot, then this impossibility of thinking the non-existence of what I know to exist is not peculiar to the case of God. Such is Gaunilo’s criticism of the main argument of the *Proslogion*; to the rest of the treatise he ends by paying the highest compliments. This tract of Gaunilo’s is historically remarkable for the anticipation in its illustration of the Lost Island of that other illustration of the Hundred



Dollars which Kant used against a later formulation of the same Argument, and which made with the general reader the fortune of Kant's criticism of it, although nothing can be further from the position of common sense than Kant's questioning of the validity of thought as such, which lies at the heart of his rejection of that Rational Theology, the principle whereof finds expression in the Ontological Proof of God's Existence. But we will pass without further consideration of Gaunilo's tract to Anselm's rejoinder—*Liber Apologeticus contra Respondentem pro Insipiente*. It begins with a gracefully turned compliment from Anselm to his critic. Since it is not the Fool against whom I wrote, says he, that answers me, but one who is no fool but a Catholic Christian, it may be enough to answer the Catholic Christian. He then recapitulates Gaunilo's arguments. If, however, 'that than which no greater can be conceived' is not thought or understood, is not in thought or understanding—then either God is not that than which no greater can be conceived, or he is not thought or understood, is not in thought or understanding. Against either of these alternatives Anselm can appeal to his critic's faith and conscience. Beyond doubt, as a matter of fact, he *does* think of God, has God in his mind. But it is certain that if 'that than which no greater can be conceived' can be thought to be, then it must actually be. For to be 'that than which no greater can be conceived', it must be eternal, and so without beginning. Now whatever can be thought to be and yet is not, must be capable of beginning to be; but 'that than which no greater can be conceived' being necessarily eternal, is not so capable; therefore it cannot be at once thought to be and yet not be. In other words, if it is possible, it must also be *real*. It was the defect detected by Leibnitz<sup>1</sup> in the Ontological Argument that it was not explicitly stated there that the notion of God was the notion of something possible,

<sup>1</sup> *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis, Opp.* ed. Erdmann, p. 80.

and not, like the conception of a swiftest possible motion, intrinsically incoherent. Again, so Anselm proceeds, no one who doubts or denies that there is anything 'than which no greater can be conceived', doubts or denies that if there were such a thing, it would be incapable of non-existence, both in thought and in fact; for else it would not be 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. Whatever can be thought to be and yet is not is capable of not being, whether in thought or in fact; and what is so capable cannot be 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. Again, whatever is not here nor there, now nor then, is capable of being nowhen or nowhere; and so all things which consist of parts, though they may exist always (like Time) or everywhere (like the Universe), yet, inasmuch as they are not wholly present in every part of time or space, as the case may be, can be thought not to be anywhen or anywhere. Since every part of them is known not to be somewhen or somewhere, every part and so the wholes can be thought not to be anywhere or anywhen, even though they *are* here and now. But 'that than which no greater can be conceived' cannot be thought not to be, for then it would not be 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. And so it is nowise even in part absent anywhere or anywhen; it is wholly everywhere and always. Can we say with Gaunilo that this thing cannot be thought or understood, while yet we understand all this about it? Surely not. Nor can we deny it to be understood in a sense, although it be not understood through and through; unless, indeed, we are prepared to say that a man who cannot look on the naked light of the sun cannot see the light of day, which yet is nothing but sunlight. Readers of Plato's *Republic*<sup>1</sup> will be reminded by this passage of Plato's use of the sun as an image of the principle of all being and all knowledge, which he calls there the Idea of the Good. What is under-

<sup>1</sup> vi. 508 A. ff.

stood (*intelligitur*), so Anselm goes on, is necessarily *in intellectu*; and our contention remains sound that whoever should think that 'that than which no greater can be conceived' is not really existent, would be thinking it to be its own contradictory—that, namely, than which something greater, to wit, the same thing really existing, *can* be thought. Thus, if 'that than which no greater can be conceived' is *in intellectu*, it must also be *in re*. The example of the Lost Island (and Anselm would certainly have said the same of the Hundred Dollars of Kant) is not to the point. If Gaunilo can find anything other than 'that than which no greater can be conceived' to which the reasoning of the *Proslogion* will apply, Anselm will give him the Lost Island, never to be lost again. Just so Hegel says in reply to Kant<sup>1</sup> that God is something very different from a Hundred Dollars. Whoever thinks that 'that than which no greater can be conceived' does not really exist, either is thinking of something than which nothing greater can be conceived, or is not thinking of any such thing. If he is not, then he cannot really be thinking that such a thing does not exist; for he is not thinking of such a thing at all. If he is, then he must think that it might have a beginning or an end, but this is inconsistent with its being that than which nothing greater can be conceived; for to be this, it must, as we have seen, necessarily be eternal. As to the difficulty raised by Gaunilo that an impossibility of being thought not to be is not peculiar to the notion of God, Anselm points out the necessity of distinguishing between two things: being able at once to conceive of something not existing and to know that it does exist (which may happen in the case of anything which has beginning, end, or parts; that is, which is in time or space—but not, according to Anselm, in the case of God); and being able to know something to exist and to conceive it as at the same time not existing (which is not possible

<sup>1</sup> *Logik*, § 51 (*Werke*, vi. 112; tr. Wallace, second edition, p. 108).

with anything). Readers of Mill's *Logic* may here be reminded of his controversies with Whewell<sup>1</sup> and with Herbert Spencer,<sup>2</sup> about the 'inconceivability of the opposite'. Anselm goes on to disclaim the expression '*majus omnibus*' which Gaunilo has used as though it were an equivalent for '*id quo majus cogitari nequit*'. But the two phrases have not at all the same significance. The necessary existence of what is *majus omnibus* could only be shown by the help of a preceding proof that *id quod majus cogitari nequit* which *can* be directly shown necessarily to exist, is *majus omnibus*. Still, it no doubt, can be shown, by the help of such a preceding proof, that what is *majus omnibus* necessarily exists; but it cannot similarly be shown that anything (such as the Lost Island) which *can not* be identified with *id quo majus cogitari nequit* necessarily exists; and Anselm admits that he himself would have been as great a fool as Gaunilo says, had he attempted to prove the existence of the Lost Island from the intelligibility of the description of it; but he did no such thing. The Lost Island is not *id quo majus cogitari nequit*, and of nothing but this will Anselm's argument hold. Gaunilo is, Anselm thinks, inconsistent in saying at one time that what is false can be in the understanding as its object, and at another that he cannot think that of which I speak because he cannot conceive it really to exist. He has not done justice to Anselm's method, by which it is first proved that 'that than which no greater can be thought', is in the understanding (as Gaunilo admits that even what is false can be), and then it is shown that it cannot be *in solo intellectu*, merely in the understanding, but, if it be in the understanding, must also be *in re*, must really exist. Nor does Anselm see any force in Gaunilo's contention that it is no more difficult to think the non-existence of 'that than which no greater can be conceived' than the non-existence of God under that name. For a man *must* understand to

<sup>1</sup> ii. 5.<sup>2</sup> ii. 6.

some extent the meaning of the former phrase, while the word *Deus*, God, might mean nothing to him. Why then should he deny a statement which to a certain extent he understands, because there is another statement which he does not understand at all? As to Gaunilo's objection to Anselm's illustration from the picture's existence in the painter's mind before it is actually painted, this illustration was not introduced in order to show that 'that than which no greater can be conceived' is something of this same sort, but only to show that a thing might be in the mind without existing outside of it; and as to Gaunilo's point that we cannot form any conception of the Supreme Good, because there is nothing like it, from which to argue to it, surely every lesser Good is like the Supreme Good so far as it is good. One can easily see that if a thing is good which comes into being and passes away, it would be better if it never passed away; better yet if, being eternal, it never either came into being or passed away. We may remark here that we could have known from this passage, if it were not otherwise certain, that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was not in Anselm's hands, as else he would not have ignored Aristotle's remark<sup>1</sup> about the Platonic Idea of the Good in particular, and about Platonic Ideas in general, that they are not sufficiently distinguished from the particulars of which he regards them as an otiose duplication by their alleged eternity—since a thing is no whiter for being white a long time. Can we not (Anselm proceeds) conjecture from 'that than which a greater can be conceived', that than which no greater can be conceived? Even the Psalmist's fool, whose champion Gaunilo has constituted himself, can thus be met; and Gaunilo himself, Catholic Christian that he is, may be reminded of the text<sup>2</sup> which tells us 'that the invisible things of God are known by the things that do appear'. When we hear speak of that than

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.* i. 1096 b 3 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 20,



which no greater can be conceived ' we can conceive and understand this much, though the thing which answers to this description surpass our powers of conception and understanding. Even he who denies that there is anything to which the description applies, in the act of denying it must conceive and understand the notion which forms a part of this very negation. It is possible to conceive and understand the notion of that which cannot not be, or in other words which necessarily exists ; and this notion is the notion of something greater than anything which is able not to be, or in other words, whose existence is not necessary. If then, when a man thinks of that than which no greater can be conceived, he is thinking of something which is able not to be, he is *not* thinking of ' that than which no greater can be conceived ' , for something, namely, the necessarily-existent, can be conceived greater than this. But the same thing cannot be at once conceived and not conceived. Thus, whoever thinks of ' that than which no greater can be conceived ' is not thinking of anything which is able not to be, but of something which necessarily exists. If this thing does not exist, it is not that of which he is thinking ; for that of which he is thinking, must necessarily be. Anselm then concludes his argument with thanks to his kindly critic.

It now remains to make one or two remarks on the whole argument, which, as I have said, having very fully discussed elsewhere, I do not propose again to discuss at length now. The first observation I shall make concerns the real bearing of Anselm's reasoning. We have already seen that what is proved by it is an Absolute Reality. This, of course, cannot be proved by any argument which contains no more in the conclusion than in the premisses ; and therefore the argument, like the other so-called Proofs of the existence of God, is not a proof in the sense of the subsumption of a particular fact under a general rule or of a less general

rule under a more general.<sup>1</sup> Further, Anselm, finding that our very perception of things as imperfect, finite, relative, implies the presence to us of a Perfect, Infinite, and Absolute Reality, with which we contrast these other things, of whose imperfection, finitude, relativity we could not, apart from such a contrast, become aware—allows (with Plato) our judgements of intrinsic value to play as large a part in constituting our conception of this Reality as those judgements which are sometimes called purely logical. What makes us conscious that he fails to deal with real difficulties from lack of fully perceiving them, is not, I think, so much his ostensibly giving to an argument of this kind the form of an ordinary syllogism—that mistake is easily corrected when once pointed out—but his neglect of the problem raised when we ask what is the relation of the finite Spirit to the Absolute or Supreme Spirit ; and whether the life and thought and goodness (or badness) of the former can fall outside the life, thought, goodness of the latter. Anselm keeps his account very close to religious experience ; but the pressure of the difficulty which finds expression in the question whether God (as the religious man uses the word) can be the Absolute, or the Absolute (as the philosopher uses the word) can be God, is not fully felt by him ; largely, no doubt, because he had little or no acquaintance with modes of thought which challenged the assumption, made by such a religion as Anselm's, that the Absolute can be an object of worship. We saw reason to think that he did not know the writings of John the Scot, the Neoplatonist born out of due time, in whom in the ninth century Celtic Ireland produced perhaps its solitary representative of genius in the region of philosophical speculation ; unless indeed we count Berkeley, who, though on his father's side not an Irish

<sup>1</sup> See an admirable paper on the Anselmic argument by the late Dr. Edward Caird in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for Oct. 1899. Cp. my *Problems in the Relations between God and Man*, p. 187. .

Celt, but a son of the English Pale, was perhaps of native Irish descent through his mother. Had Anselm known John's writings, they might have called his attention to this class of difficulties on which, as I have said, he does not touch.

The next observation I shall make on Anselm's rational or philosophical theology will concern its place in the historical development of Natural Theology, and that will only repeat what I have already said,<sup>1</sup> that Anselm is not trammelled in his development of a speculative account of God by any hard-and-fast distinction between the spheres of Revealed and Natural Theology. Hence he neither on the one hand artificially excludes from his philosophical synthesis the religious experience embodied in the tradition of the religious community to which he belonged and which he shared, nor on the other refuses to follow his argument whither it would lead him for fear of trespassing on ground sacred to Revelation. That the latter kind of refusal is never philosophically justifiable needs not to be said; but it is less often realized that the religious tradition which the exponent of Natural Theology supposes himself to have excluded often guides a course of reasoning which is ostensibly independent of it. Far better is the frank admission of experience as being no less in religion than elsewhere the necessary presupposition of reflection; Anselm's doctrine of Faith is in fact no confession of intellectual bondage but rather a recognition of the true method of all speculation.

My third observation is that, while Anselm in the *Mono-  
logion* and *Proslogion* draws no line between the existence and unity of God on the one hand and his trinity on the other, such as was drawn by a later Scholasticism, which allowed belief in the former to rest on grounds of natural reason, but belief in the latter on revelation; yet in neither of these two treatises is anything said of the Incarnation. This is remarked upon by Anselm himself

<sup>1</sup> pp. 140, 158, 159.

in a later treatise, *de Fide Trinitatis et Incarnationis*. I do not, however, find in his writings any reference to a well-known passage in Augustine's *Confessions* <sup>1</sup> which might have seemed to authorize him in drawing a line at this point between Natural and Revealed Theology. I refer to the statement that Augustine himself had found in the works of the Platonists the doctrine of the Word of God who in the beginning was with God and was God, but that the doctrine of the Word made flesh he did not find in their books. Anselm, no doubt, regarded the fact of the Incarnation as historical and not ascertainable *a priori*, but (as the treatise above mentioned shows) he was quite ready to discuss on general principles of reason the nature and implications of the fact ; to prove for example that it could only be the Son that was incarnate, not either of the other Persons or all three Persons. It is not as revealed dogma but as involving an historical fact that the Incarnation stands in any way apart for Anselm. John the Scot, indeed (with whose work, as we have seen, Anselm was almost certainly unacquainted), may be said in his book *de Divisione Naturae* to have treated the Incarnation without any reserve as part of a general system of rational theology ; but with him the historicity of the Incarnation falls very much into the background. This was not because he disbelieved it ; it was only because the historical fact appeared to him rather as an external symbol of a necessary stage in the eternal process of the divine nature than as entering in its capacity as an historical fact into his theological system. On the other hand, John the Scot's method of exposition involves perpetual quotation from written authorities, such as are conspicuously absent from the writings of Anselm, who is always far more the thinker than the scholar. It is to be remembered, however, that with John the Scot authority, highly as he regards it, is essentially 'reason at second hand'.<sup>2</sup> As has already

<sup>1</sup> vii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 'Nil enim aliud mihi videtur esse vera auctoritas, nisi rationis virtute

been hinted, although I should be prepared to defend Anselm's method as in essentials superior to that of writers who were more concerned to establish a scientific boundary between the spheres of Natural and Revealed Theology, it is to be borne in mind that it was, no doubt, in part the fact that he was practically unacquainted with the detail of any non-Christian system that made it easier for him to adopt this method than for the later Schoolmen, who had before them the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* and the commentary of Averroes as well as other works of non-Christian philosophy, whether Greek or Arabian. I have already called your attention to the fact that one of Anselm's ablest disciples, Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster, whose reputation, though it soon waned, yet in the century after his death stood extremely high among the theologians of Western Europe, wrote a Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew, based on his own friendly intercourse with a learned Jew from Mainz with whom he had business relations. The present Dean of Wells, Dr. Armitage Robinson, who, when he was Dean of Westminster, devoted himself to the exploration of the mediaeval history of the great church over which he then presided, has published a most interesting monograph on this remote predecessor of his own, in which he has printed extracts from another dialogue by Gilbert between a Christian and a Philosopher.<sup>1</sup> The abbot represents himself as induced to go to a philosophers' club in London, to hear there a discussion on the Unity of God. As Dean Robinson says, the scene is so curious that the opening sentences are worth quoting in full. 'Two philosophers had undertaken to hold a discussion on the worship of one God and on the unity of the true religion.

reperita veritas et a sanctis Patribus ad posteritatis utilitatem litteris commendata', *de Divisione Naturae*, i. 69.

<sup>1</sup> Brit. Mus. Addit. 8166, fol. 29-37; see Robinson, *Gilbert Crispin*, pp. 73 ff. In what follows will be found a fuller account of the contents of the MS. than it fell within Dean Robinson's plan to give.



I knew the place where it was to be held, but did not venture to go because the way to it was one where one might easily lose oneself. An acquaintance suggested to me that I should go thither and listen to the arguments brought forward in defence of the true religion. I objected my delicate health, and the difficulty of finding the way through such a maze of streets. He promised to be my guide, offered me his hand, and with friendly violence began to pull me along after him. At last we came to the hostelry for which we were looking. My companion went into the house because he was a member of the club, I remained without as I was a stranger. I sat near the door because I was known to one of the keepers of it. There were sitting there together several learned men, and, as it seemed to me, students<sup>1</sup> of logic, for the question then under discussion between them was this: how to understand the passage of Aristotle<sup>2</sup> which says: 'If no primary substances existed, nothing else could exist.' For Porphyry and other philosophers maintain that individuals, if taken away, do not take away with them species and genera, but species and genera take away with them the individuals; Aristotle, however, calls individuals 'primary substances' and calls species and genera 'secondary substances'. Two others near me were discussing another problem, namely, whether Grammar be a kind of Logic; for if it is not there will not be three kinds of Logic nor seven Liberal Arts. But the parts which make up any genus make up any species of that genus. Invention and Judgement are the constitutive parts of Logic; they will also then be parts of Grammar, or else Grammar will not be a species of Logic. But in Grammar no account is given of Invention and Judgement, and so Grammar would seem to be neither natural art, nor a part of Logic, nor a Liberal Art. I was waiting to hear the solution of these problems, but soon we

<sup>1</sup> *studentes*: MS. *studens*, but the text is very careless.

<sup>2</sup> *Cat.* 5. 2 b, 5, 6.

undertook a more serious business. One of those within came to us who were without, a person of dignified aspect, who in a few grave words commanded silence and bade us listen attentively and with proper reverence to what was being said within. I drew nearer, looked in and entered. The discussion was between two philosophers of great reputation but of different schools. One was a heathen and a skilled assailant of Christianity on grounds of reason; the other a defender of Christianity by true arguments. And thus the heathen began . . .'

'The opponent of Christianity begins by asserting that the ancient poets while they offered pleasant fables to the vulgar taught deep truths to those who could understand them. Man must act under the guidance of reason and justice and ever remember what is due to God his Creator. The Christian philosopher at once quotes Scripture on the 'whole duty of man'. But his opponent objects to arguments from sacred writings and demands reason rather than authority. Christians profess, he says, that the author of their scriptures and the Jewish scriptures is one and the same; and yet neither will Christians keep the Jewish laws nor Jews the Christian. He will have no arguments based on the authority of the Scriptures. The Christian accepts his terms and proceeds to argue on grounds of reason only for the unity and against the plurality of deity.'<sup>1</sup> The definition of *God* put into the mouth of the Christian disputant, *quo nichil maius est et quod super omnia est*, betrays the disciple of Anselm. The heathen opponent objects that Christians while speaking of God as immutable, notwithstanding represent Him as changeable; and instances the scriptural account of God repenting that he had made man at the time of the Deluge and the disregard by Christians of the Mosaic law although Christ himself said that no jot or tittle should pass from it. The Christian exhorts to faith as a necessary

<sup>1</sup> The above summary, from the beginning of the paragraph to this point, is quoted from Dean Robinson's *Gilbert Crispin*, p. 74.

antecedent to understanding in religion as in the Liberal Arts. This, of course, is also Anselmian. The alleged changeableness of God the Christian illustrates by the analogy of the physician, who uses gentler or more painful methods according to his patient's need. The objector is satisfied on this point, but does not recognize its application to the Christian disregard of the Mosaic law ; which Christians only get over by asserting that they do keep it all, part literally, part figuratively. Like many later objectors, he complains of the doctrine of the Trinity as stated in the Athanasian Creed. ' What need is there with a view to the saving of the soul to introduce these dialectical subtleties, and by occasion thereof bring men of simple understanding into the toils of error ? ' The Christian admits that such questions are often asked among Christian themselves. He begins to give the ordinary interpretation of the Mosaic law as figurative and as meant only for one people, but the heathen cuts him short, saying that he does not deny the consistency of the Old Testament with itself, but rather the consistency of the New Testament with the Old Testament, especially as regards the divine unity. Nor, although he allows himself to be convinced on the general question of the consistency of the two parts of the Bible, can he accept the Christian doctrine of a humiliated and suffering God. Christians mock at the Penates in Virgil, which needed to be saved by Aeneas from the sack of Troy, though they were able to establish and rule the Roman Empire ; but the Christian doctrine is open to the same objection. The Christian replies by stating the orthodox doctrine of Christ's two natures, and the heathen (without much reference to this) admits that, if God really did thus submit to humiliation for man's salvation, so great a grace to man would be in truth unspeakably precious. It is not the doctrine of the Incarnation at which he halts at last, but that of the Trinity. His last words are as follows : ' Of God then, whether of mine or of thine or whether we

both say of ours, since there is one God alike for me and for you, this is to me a most sure truth that he is one and hath his origin from none but himself, nor did he at any time begin to be. He can do all that he wills and is righteous in all that he wills. How the evils which we do and he permits can have a place in a world ruled by his righteousness and omnipotence is a great mystery. For if God wills evil, where is his righteousness, and if he does not will it, where is his omnipotence? But however we may dispute about this, God doth all that he wills, since there is no might nor counsel that can prevail against him. On that problem of the Trinity in Unity in the Godhead which I have propounded I think you do not wish to dispute with me, since you could by no means prove it to me, nor by any art of disputation succeed in wringing from me assent thereto.' 'Then,' the narrator continues, 'he rose and departed I know not whither, down-cast alike in mind and in countenance.' I have described this dialogue at some length because it is not in print. It is plain that it is of considerable interest as showing us a disciple of Anselm in an atmosphere of free discussion, different from any in which Anselm is likely to have found himself. For I think it is quite possible, especially in view of the well-known reputation of the reigning sovereign, William Rufus, as a free-thinker both in religion and in ethics, that Gilbert Crispin may be believed when he tells us of such a philosophical society as existing in the London of his day. It is less likely that in the Norman country-side accessible from the monastery of Bec, where Anselm had spent his more leisured years, there was anything of the sort; and after his elevation to Canterbury he was too great a dignitary and too busy an official to have had the opportunity of knowing more than younger men like Gilbert may have told him about such opportunities of freer discussion in great cities. In any case the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* were written while he was still at Bec.

### III

#### ABELARD

WHENEVER Abelard speaks of Anselm, it is with the greatest respect ; and it was by no means usual for Abelard to speak so of men who were his own contemporaries. An attentive reading of Abelard will, I think, suggest that he had read Anselm's writings carefully and that they had made a considerable impression upon him. Yet it would be difficult to find two characters, intellectual and moral, more dissimilar. Anselm was a metaphysician of the truest breed, but even more obviously was he a saint. We see in him, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, the saint as philosopher ; he is a philosopher in his most fervent devotion, and his characteristic theological speculations were not of the study only ; for he carried them with him into his oratory, or perhaps it would be truer to say that he carried them from his oratory into his study. No motto would have fitted him better than the saying with which Hegel excused himself for his infrequent attendance at public worship, *Das Denken ist auch Gottesdienst* ; though he would not, like Hegel, have used it as an apology for not going to church.

It would be true to say of Abelard also that his thinking was his truest worship ; yet thinking did not with him as with Anselm naturally take upon itself the air of worship. Passionate, egotistical, polemical, rebellious, the great ' Peripatetic of Pallet ', as his disciples were wont to call him, presents the strongest contrast possible to the sympathetic gentleness, the unselfish humility, the unvarying courtesy in controversy, the steadfast though open-eyed orthodoxy of Anselm. His reverence for the memory of Anselm may recall Rousseau's reverence for the memory



of Fénelon, whose *valet de chambre*, he once said, he would gladly have been.<sup>1</sup> We can well imagine that Abelard would recognize in the saintly Archbishop of Canterbury no pompous pretender, such as he was apt to see in other highly-reputed teachers of his own day, but as genuine a lover of truth as himself ; and that he would discover in him none of those foibles which he detected even in men like St. Bernard and St. Norbert (whom, indeed, he had little cause to love), the foibles of men with a following of enthusiastic partisans and with a turn for manipulating the affairs of the world to the glory of God.

It is a fact of some interest that Anselm and Abelard had a common antagonist in Roscellinus of Compiègne, who startled the learned world of his day with his nominalism, contending that universals were but *flatus vocis* and rationalizing the doctrine of the Trinity into a thinly disguised tritheism. He seems to have been one of those whom a pre-occupation with logical subtleties leads to the kind of metaphysic which Hegel attributes to the 'abstract understanding'. As the Cynics, whose master Antisthenes seems to have caught up from Socrates his interest in exact definition, passed thence to the extreme of nominalism, so was it with such *dialectici* as Roscellinus in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The traditional saying of Antisthenes to Plato, 'I see a horse but not horseness',<sup>2</sup> the Cynics' denial of all but identical judgements, were repeated in a thinker whom Anselm<sup>3</sup> reproached with not distinguishing a horse from its colour, and who, as we learn from Abelard, found a contradiction in the conception of a whole made up of parts. To such a mind, proud of its logical preciseness and destitute, perhaps, as the reported conduct

<sup>1</sup> Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Essai sur J.-J. Rousseau*; quoted by Morley, *Rousseau*, p. 440.

<sup>2</sup> Simplicius, in *Arist. Cat. Schol.*, ed. Brandis 66<sup>b</sup> 47; cf. the similar story of Diogenes, *Diog. Laert.* vi. 2, § 53.

<sup>3</sup> *de Fide Trin.* c. 2.

and extant letters of Roscellinus suggest, of a deep religious interest, the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity,—which has sometimes served in ages when the ‘abstract understanding’ has been dominant, as the refuge of a profounder philosophy—presented an insuperable difficulty. He could but offer to theologians the alternative of tritheism—three Gods with concordant wills—or Sabellianism—three manifestations of one God—and he chooses for himself in all but name (and in name he refrains only out of deference to usage) the former alternative, which is the less religiously defensible of the two. It is not necessary to seek out with Abelard<sup>1</sup> the absurdest form into which his teaching can be thrown—we may even, with the always charitable Anselm,<sup>2</sup> be willing to assign to his reporter, not to himself, his most questionable expressions—yet for all that he is a tritheist. The doctrine of the Trinity recognizes in the living activity of God, as known historically and by inward experience in redemption and sanctification, no mere transient appearance and no mere subjective representation of a hidden and unknowable Reality, but the manifestation of an eternally real concrete life of identity in difference within the very divine essence itself. The view technically known by theologians as Sabellianism fails to express the religious consciousness of the Christian, because it seems to represent the economy of redemption as falling outside of God’s innermost nature; but it at least leaves us the unity of God, which is the warrant, because the true ground, of that ultimate unity which in all departments of its activity the human spirit postulates and seeks to apprehend. The tritheism of Roscellinus sacrifices this deepest interest to the mere shell of the Christian dogma, giving us for a Christian Trinity in Unity a heathen triad of co-equal co-operating Gods.

If we can believe Abelard,<sup>3</sup> Roscellinus was banished by

<sup>1</sup> See especially *Opp.*, ed. Cousin, ii. 151.

<sup>2</sup> *de Fide Trin.* c. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Opp.* ii. 151.

the King from England (where he seems to have devoted himself to a campaign against permitting the illegitimate sons of priests to be ordained priests themselves)<sup>1</sup> for his attacks on Anselm, who had written a treatise *de Fide Trinitatis et Incarnationis* against him which we still possess. Long after, when Abelard, whose master he seems <sup>2</sup> at one time to have been, lay himself under suspicion of heresy of an opposite type on the same subject as that for his views on which Roscellinus had been condemned at the Council of Soissons in 1092, the old controversialist, glad perhaps to find himself able to take the field on the orthodox side, attacked his former pupil, and when Abelard replied with some asperity, returned to the charge with a peculiarly brutal outburst of personal abuse, which gives one no favourable impression of his temper and disposition.

It would be out of place here to tell the story of Abelard's life, or to relate the troublous adventures of which he has himself left us so lively a narration in the so-called *Historia Calamitatum*, written in the form of a letter. It will suffice to mention the principal events of his career, to point out the importance of the part which he played in the history of philosophical and especially of theological thought, and to show how far his attitude to the problems of Natural Theology agrees with and how far it differs from that of Anselm. Peter Abelard was born in 1074 at Pallet or Palais near Nantes, the son of a laird or squire called Berengar. He was the eldest son, but caring more for letters than for arms, he abandoned the inheritance to his younger brother and set out to Paris as a student; he had a stormy career as a very far from docile pupil of the celebrated William of Champeaux, to whom he soon took up an attitude of opposition and whom he eventually succeeded in driving, first from his philosophical

<sup>1</sup> See a letter to him from Theobald of Étampes, *Magister Oxnefordiae*, in d'Achery's *Spicilegium*, iii. 448.

<sup>2</sup> Otto of Freising, *de Gestis Friderici*, i. 49; Abelard, *Ouvrages inédits*, pp. xlii. 471.

position in respect to the nature of Universals and then from his office as head of the Cathedral School. He then set up as a teacher on his own account at Melun, but soon after returned to Paris and gathered that company of students on the Mont Sainte-Geneviève (the centre to this day of the Quartier Latin) which may be said to have been the germ of the great University of Paris. He left Paris about 1113 to bid farewell to his mother, who was about to withdraw from the world into a nunnery, and returned from this interview resolved to abandon dialectics for theology. He went to Laon, where the best reputed theological teaching of the day was to be had, but he soon proved as little able to sit in theology at the feet of Anselm (not the Archbishop, but a namesake, then eminent as the master of the Laon Cathedral School) as in philosophy at the feet of William of Champeaux. After setting up a rival lecture and being silenced by his master's jealousy (so at least he represents the matter), he returned to Paris. Students came about him again, and he was becoming as eminent a theologian as he had been a philosopher, when he fell in love with Heloise, in whose uncle's house he was a boarder. The romantic story of his passion, his marriage, and the cruel vengeance of her uncle, need not be told here. Abelard retired into the monastery of St. Denys, Heloise having taken the veil at Argenteuil. It was now that his theological writings began to attract attention; and his first book on the Trinity was condemned in 1121 at the instigation of his rivals in the Laon School—his old master Anselm was dead—by a Council held at Soissons, the same place as had seen the assembly which twenty-nine years before had condemned the very different doctrine of Roscellinus on the same subject. As we have seen, Roscellinus himself came forward on this occasion as an opponent of his former disciple. Abelard, at first imprisoned in the monastery of St. Medard, near Soissons, was soon set free to return to St. Denys, where he proceeded

to make himself unpopular by raising critical difficulties as to the identity of the patron saint of his house with the Areopagite converted by St. Paul. He withdrew to an oratory at Troyes, where students soon flocked to him, and which grew into the chapel of the Paraclete. It was now that his theological opponents stirred up against him the most influential churchmen of his time, St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Norbert the founder of the Premonstratensian order. He says that he now seriously thought of withdrawing into some heathen country, where his ill-repute among Christian divines might lead to his being supposed to be no Christian, that so he might there be able to lead a Christian life without molestation. He did not, indeed, go so far afield; he accepted, however, about 1125, the abbacy of the remote Breton monastery of St. Gildas at Ruys, where he spent some miserable years among monks who seemed to him mere savages, whose very language he did not understand, who resented his efforts to reform their lax morality and who at last attempted to poison him in the sacramental wine. Meanwhile he founded at his old retreat, the chapel of the Paraclete, a convent of nuns for Heloise to preside over, the monastery of Argenteuil, of which she was prioress, having been dispersed. Ceasing to reside himself at St. Gildas, though retaining his rank and title as its abbot, he returned to Paris and again taught on the Mont Sainte-Geneviève, where he had among his hearers John of Salisbury, the great scholar of the next generation, and Arnold of Brescia, who carried his teacher's revolutionary spirit into politics and attempted to set up a republican government at Rome.<sup>1</sup> His heretical opinions were condemned at the Council of Sens in 1140, at the instance of St. Bernard, but

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Alphandéry, in his article on Arnold in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, throws doubt on the relationship of Arnold to Abelard; but there seems no reason, because St. Bernard was sometimes an unfair controversialist, to reject express statements of his in which there is no improbability and against which no evidence is produced.



by appealing to Rome he avoided the condemnation of his person. He then retired to Cluny, where he died two years later. His friend and namesake, the Abbot Peter, commonly known as Peter the Venerable, testified in a remarkable letter to the widowed Heloise, which is still extant, that the great teacher showed himself in his last days a pattern of studious piety, *vere Christi philosophus*. His body was brought by the Abbot to be buried at the Paraclete, where Heloise twenty-one years later was laid beside him.

Such is the bare outline of the life of one whose influence, not always fully acknowledged (for the shadow of his reputation for heterodoxy remained upon his name), may be traced, one is almost inclined to say, in every department of mediaeval thought and culture. The very method of scholastic philosophy may without exaggeration be called his creation. The *Sic et Non*, in which he set passages from the Fathers one against another, to the scandal of conservative theologians, was the germ of the plan by which St. Thomas Aquinas develops his thought through the exhibition of a thesis with the authorities which can be alleged for it, of the objections to it with the authorities for them, and lastly of the solution, in which the thesis is affirmed or denied, and the objections to the view thus taken dealt with each in turn. In its developed form, no doubt, this method differed from Abelard's *Sic et Non*, for in that startling work there were no solutions reached and no attempt was made to soften or explain the patristic discrepancies; but it is impossible not to recognize in the *Sic et Non* the immediate suggestion of the type of theological exposition adopted by Abelard's pupil, Peter Lombard, for his *Sentences*, which became the authoritative theological text-book of the Middle Ages, and set the fashion to the great teachers of the thirteenth century; who, indeed, developed their views to a great extent by way of comment on the work of the Master of the *Sentences*, as Peter Lombard came to be called. Indeed,

the very currency of the word Theology in the West for the study of Christian doctrine was due to Abelard.<sup>1</sup> Nor was theology by any means the only department in which the later Middle Ages owed some of their most characteristic features to Abelard. To name only one to which I have already referred, the concourse of Abelard's pupils on the Mont Sainte-Geneviève was the true nucleus of the University of Paris, which was in all probability (as Dr. Rashdall has shown<sup>2</sup>) the parent, and was certainly the model, of our own Oxford; indeed, all Universities on this side of the Alps may be said to owe their origin directly or indirectly to that of Paris. This society of teachers and students became so thoroughly the primary organ of learning in the West, that France could boast herself to possess in it one of three great representative institutions of Christian civilization to be placed side by side with the Papacy, which divine Providence had granted to Italy, and the Empire, which was the sacred heritage of Germany. Abelard's position as to the problems of Natural Theology is in some respects nearer to Anselm's than was that of the later Schoolmen. No more for him than for Anselm does the divine Unity belong to the sphere of Natural, and the divine Trinity to that of Revealed Theology. To him, as to Anselm, the metaphysical and theological works of Aristotle and of his Mohammedan commentators were unknown. And he is as little concerned as Anselm with the influences of the heavenly bodies and their relation to divine providence. I do not mean, of course, that he was unacquainted with the belief in astrological prediction or even with the difficulty it involved from the point of view of the freedom of the will; for the puzzles about necessity and contingency were familiar to him, and he discusses them in connexion with the references to them in Aristotle's treatise

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 16 ff.; cp. J. de Ghellinck, *Le Mouvement théologique du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 66 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ii. pp. 349 ff.

*de Interpretatione*, with a passing reference to the inconsistency of the belief of astrologers in their power of prediction with the contingency of the events which they profess to foretell. But astrology was always suspect to the orthodox Christian ; while the difficulty about prediction and contingency was raised no less by the predictions of prophets than by those of astrologers. A new element was introduced when Aristotle had obtained the supreme position which he held in the later schools, and his sanction was known to be given to a doctrine which treated the heavenly bodies as, in some sense at least, divine. But this, as we have seen, lay in the future in the time of Abelard.

On the other hand, in the problem of the relation of Christianity to other religions he is deeply interested, the religion which he has in view being that of the ancient philosophers and that of the Jews.

Abelard has left us a very curious monument of his interest in this question in the form of a Dialogue between a Christian, a Jew, and a Philosopher. This was not the first Dialogue of the kind to be published ; Gilbert Crispin for instance had, as we have seen, written two, one of a Christian with a Jew, another of a Christian with a heathen philosopher. Abelard's Dialogue, in which the two controversies are combined, is never referred to by himself, nor is it attributed to him by any contemporary ; yet there is no doubt that it is his, since the opening words contain a plain reference to the attack made upon his theological treatise by Alberic and Lotulf of Rheims, loyal disciples and intellectual heirs of his old master Anselm of Laon, whom he had, as they doubtless thought, treated with so much insolence. Nor is there anything in the style or the views (as Cousin observes) which does not agree with the supposition of Abelard's authorship. He represents himself in this work as dreaming that three men were approaching him by different roads and saying that they were men of different sects, though all

in their several ways worshippers of one God. One is a Philosopher, content with the law natural ; two claimed to have a written revelation, one being a Jew and the other a Christian. The three appoint the dreamer to be a judge between them. This plan, the Philosopher says, was of his devising. It has always been his principle to follow reason not authority in the search for truth ; and the course of his studies has brought him at last to Moral Philosophy. He has investigated the views of the various existing sects to see which were the most reasonable ; but he has found the Jews stupid and the Christians mad. The three disputants had wished to find a judge that should be neither Jew, Christian, nor Philosopher ; but none such was to be found, and they have finally pitched upon the dreamer ' for we know you are well acquainted ' (so they address him) ' alike with the force of philosophical arguments and with the authoritative standards of both the Laws—that is the Jewish and the Christian.' The Philosopher goes on to flatter the dreamer for his acuteness and learning. He assures him that he excels in both kinds of learning, philosophical and theological, above all writers and teachers, including his own masters ; and mentions as a proof of it ' that wonderful work on Theology which envy could not away with, yet could not prevail to destroy, but has made all the more illustrious by persecuting it '. This certainly must refer to the book which Cousin printed as *Introductio ad Theologiam*, and of which an earlier form (discovered and printed twenty years ago by Stölzle) was condemned at Soissons, where its author was made to burn it with his own hand. This calamity he recognizes in his *Historia Calamitatum* as a judgement on him for his pride ; but it does not seem to have succeeded in uprooting it. We might like to think that a really great man could not have felt the self-complacency to which this passage of the Dialogue bears witness ; but Abelard does not stand alone among philosophers in this respect. We find

something of the same kind in Empedocles, in Roger Bacon, and in Giordano Bruno; something perhaps also in Schopenhauer; and yet the nearest parallel to Abelard, alike in his passionate egotism and in his wide-reaching influence on the mind of Europe, is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on whom, as the *Nouvelle Héloïse* shows, the tragic story of the great mediaeval teacher exercised a strong attraction, and of whose *Confessions* the *Historia Calamitatum* in many ways reminds us.

In the Dialogue, however, the dreamer is made to disclaim any fitness for the office thus flatteringly urged upon him. He tells the philosopher that he has an unfair advantage; for he fights with reason and the authority of a written law against both Jew and Christian, neither of whom can use the authority of their respective laws against him, since he does not acknowledge it, while they cannot refuse to acknowledge it when used by him against them; and they, it may be supposed, as more accustomed than he to rely on authority, are less expert than he in the use of reason. The office of umpire, however, the dreamer accepts, hoping to get some profit from the discussion, since no teaching is so false as to have no truth in it, no disputation so idle as to have no instruction in it. The philosopher then claims the right of opening the debate; since not only is he the originator of the discussion, but relies on what is prior not in time only but also, in virtue of its greater simplicity, by nature to any written precepts, namely, the Law Natural. He asks the others whether they were led to their several views by reason or only by the common opinion and sentiment current among their people. It cannot, he thinks, be denied that to what men are taught as right to hold when children, they have an attachment arising from custom and natural affection, which prevents them from gainsaying it. Hence it is no wonder that the progress so marked in natural science is not to be observed in the field of religion; and that



he is thought foremost in the faith who varies least from the popular view. For men do not love inquiring into what they know that they cannot defend by argument ; though they do not blush to profess their belief in words 'as though faith consisted in repeating with the lips rather than in comprehending with the intelligence'. And they are all the prouder if what they believe is something ineffable and inconceivable, and they can think all who differ from them to be separated from God's mercy and they alone blessed. Seeing then the blindness and pride of men he betook himself to the divine mercy, praying it to deliver him from the whirlpool of opinion and bring him out of the storm into a haven of safety.

Although these reflections are put not into the mouth of the Dreamer, who is identified with the writer himself, but into that of the Philosopher, we are plainly far from the position of Anselm with respect to faith, when such reflections can be stated in so sympathetic and vivid a way. Abelard has learned from his own experience to know only too well the morally weak side of orthodox conviction, its tendency to intellectual sluggishness and to the complacent exclusion of others from the blessings it believes to be its own. On the other hand, his conception of the Philosopher not merely as freely criticizing, but as actually starting as it were *in vacuo*, without any presuppositions, in contrast with the Jew and the Christian, already foreshadows that abstract and unhistorical view of the development of human thought, whether in the sphere of Religion or elsewhere, which underlies the Rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which contrasts unfavourably with the conception implied in Anselm's phrase *Fides quaerens intellectum* and in his frequent quotation of the Scriptural phrase *Nisi credideritis non intelligetis*. At the same time it is misleading (with a recent writer in the *Church Quarterly Review*) to represent Abelard as deliberately setting up against Anselm's *Credo ut intelligam*, its direct converse,

*Intelligimus ut credamus.* I find no such phrase in Abelard. No doubt he scandalized St. Bernard by his strictures on unintelligent faith, and insisted that we could only rightly be said to believe what has an intelligible meaning for us. But he rather identifies belief properly so called with understanding than puts understanding in relation to belief where Anselm puts belief in relation to understanding. The subsequent process, which Anselm called understanding (*intelligere*), he preferred to call knowledge (*cognoscere*), and falls back from Anselm's formula to Augustine's, which had perhaps suggested it, *Credimus ut cognoscamus*.<sup>1</sup>

The Jew claims the right of first answer from the priority of his race over the Gentile in the reception of God's Law. The Christian may come after and fill up the deficiencies of his argument from his additional Testament. The Philosopher agrees, and on the Jew requesting that his own deficiencies as a reasoner may not be imputed to his people or to his religion, consents, saying that for his own part he has come to seek the truth and find salvation for his soul, not to show off his own cleverness by sophistical quibbling. The Jew then admits that he and his fellows may, as men in general do, have come to their faith by the suggestion of those they loved and by their early education. But now they are kept in it by reason. The Philosopher asks for the reason. The Jew says that he and his people obey their law as given by God, and the philosophers do wrong to despise it, since if the Jews cannot demonstrate its divine origin, neither can the Philosopher disprove it. If a slave is told by his fellow servants of a command given by their common master in his absence and sees them obeying it, he would surely be wrong to doubt of its having really been given, and refuse to join his comrades in performing it. In performing it he will be on the safe side; if he does not take this safe side and the command has really been given, he will be counted

<sup>1</sup> *Tract. in Joann.* xl. c. 9; cp. *Enarr. in Ps. cxviii.* 73 (*Serm.* xviii. 3).

inexcusable ; while if he does and the report was false, not he but those who deceived him will be to blame. We have here, it may be noted, the principle of Pascal's famous wager.<sup>1</sup> It is unnecessary to follow the details of the Jew's arguments and the Philosopher's strictures upon them ; but it is, perhaps, noteworthy that the Philosopher is made to contend that a belief in spiritual good to be got by the sacrificial expiation of sin is inconsistent with belief in the sufficiency to salvation of the love of God and of our neighbour, to appeal to the passages in the Psalms which declare the uselessness of outward offerings to take away sin, and to insist that the impurities for which expiation has under the Law to be made are not real moral impurities, since they include involuntary defilements and defilements of inanimate objects. Genuine sins, murder and adultery and the like, are expiated under the Law not by sacrifice but by death. The Philosopher thus concludes that the legal purifications had to do with decency in the present life, not with the salvation of the soul, and he is thus not convinced that for the salvation of the soul any advantage is to be looked for from submission to the requirements of the Jewish Law.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian then states his case. He rests chiefly on the superiority of Christ's ethical teaching to any other. How can the Philosopher ask for any higher morality than that of the Sermon on the Mount ? What the philosophers call Ethic Christians call Divinity. The Philosopher says that he greatly approves of this change of name ; Divinity is a much better name than Ethic, since it calls the matter from that which is its goal, namely God ; for the goal is of greater

<sup>1</sup> *Pensées*, ed. Faugère ii., pp. 165 ff.

<sup>2</sup> This argument anticipates those of Socinus, *de Jesu Christo Servatore*, ii. 11, 12 ; cp. above, p. 126. The observation that under the Jewish Law venial sins only were expiated by ceremonies, grave ones punished by death, was familiar in the Middle Ages. It is quoted in Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (iv. 19) from the pseudo-Augustinian treatise *de vera et falsa poenitentia*, c. 20. This obviously mediaeval tract is printed as an appendix in the Benedictine ed. of St. Augustine, vi. 1621 ff.

dignity than the way to it, and attainment than pursuit. He admits too that Christianity is superior to Judaism in its method of attack. It assailed the Greeks who 'seek for wisdom' <sup>1</sup> with arguments and learning, while the Jews showed their folly by trusting only in miracles, a delusive kind of evidence, which can be simulated by demons, as in the case of the Egyptian magicians and of those false prophets of Antichrist against whom Christ warned his disciples. This decisive emphasis (for we may take it that Abelard agrees with the Philosopher here) on the moral evidence of Christianity as outweighing the miraculous is noteworthy. The later history of apologetic would hardly bear him out in his notion that the appeal of Judaism has been rather to miracle and that of Christianity to morality. We must, however, observe that the appeal to miracle as evidence of divine action was bound to reach its climax *after* the belief in other miracles than those related in the Bible had decayed, but *before* historical criticism had seriously affected the evidence for the truth of the Biblical narratives; that is to say, in the eighteenth century of our era. In Abelard's day the reality of many prodigies beside those in the Bible, some wrought by saints and others by demons, was of course very generally acknowledged. Abelard himself was apt to be more sceptical than most of his contemporaries, and he speaks <sup>2</sup> with undisguised contempt of the credulity of those who believed in the wonders supposed to have been wrought by his contemporary and persecutor St. Norbert, the founder of the Premonstratensian Order. It is true that even St. Bernard, whom Abelard had as little cause to love as he had to love Norbert, and whom he couples with the latter as a leader of the movement against himself, sometimes thought that Norbert went too far in his prophetic pretensions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Serm. de S. Jo. Bapt., Opp.* i. 590.

<sup>3</sup> See St. Bernard's letter to Geoffrey, Bishop of Chartres, *Ep.* 56.

To return to the Dialogue. The Christian takes up the admission of the Philosopher and contends that the fact that the Greeks were not only assailed by the ancient teachers of Christianity with arguments, but were convinced and converted thereby, should of itself put an end to doubts. For we should follow the authority of the Greeks in philosophy here as elsewhere. The Philosopher, however, insists that their authority should not be so followed as that their reasons should not be discussed, for this would be to renounce philosophy and to make it seem that the world was not converted by reason, but rather by force, as indeed the histories of Christianity, written by Christians, suggest was the case. For from these it appears that few wise men were converted before the conversion, not by reasons but by miracles, of emperors and princes, who could then compel others to follow them. And yet wise men might, one would have thought, have easily been won by argument from idolatry to the worship of one God; and certainly idolatry was prevalent under paganism, and it stands to the credit of Christianity that it is no longer prevalent now. The Christian thinks that along with the abolition of idolatry there should be reckoned to the account of Christianity the restoration of the Law Natural (Christianity is thus, as Sherlock and Tindal called it, the 'republication of the religion of nature'), and the delivery of a perfect moral doctrine by him who is the true Wisdom of God. The Philosopher remarks that he wishes Christians would show themselves by the convincing nature of their arguments to be, as they claim to be, the disciples of the Supreme Wisdom. But they are prone to take refuge in the miserable excuses of Gregory<sup>1</sup> that if reason could prove the truth of religion, there would be no merit in faith. Such an argument would justify any kind of credulity, and we should according to it not be able to defend our refusal

<sup>1</sup> *Hom. in Evang.* xxvi. § 1.



to follow the bidding of idolaters and 'bow down to wood or stone.'

The Christian disputant denies that any wise Christian forbade the rational discussion of the faith. He agrees with the Philosopher that authority as a ground of faith is inferior to reason. Reason—even when it is only the mere appearance of reason—will settle a matter in dispute, while authority always leaves room for dispute as to the meaning of the authority. With the Philosopher, who does not concede the authority of those to whom the Jew or the Christian appeal, argument must always rely upon grounds of reason; what Gregory and the fathers say, what even Christ or Moses teach, cannot be alleged against him.

The Philosopher, though (as we have seen) professing not to follow without examination the authority of the philosophers, is nevertheless made to treat them as representatives of his 'sect', much as the Christian treats the Fathers of the Church, and to undertake the defence of their teaching even to the point of arguing that what Epicurus meant by the pleasure which he called 'the Supreme Good' was the same as what Christ meant by the Kingdom of Heaven. This identification is not admitted by the Christian. The Christian has the last word in the Dialogue; but no judgement is delivered by the Dreamer; and perhaps the work is a fragment never completed by its author. I have given a somewhat lengthy account of it because it illustrates very well Abelard's interest in the question of the relation of Christian doctrine to that of the ancient philosophers whose follower his philosophical disputant may be said to be, and because it incidentally anticipates so many of the themes of later Natural Theology. Abelard was in agreement with Anselm in holding that it could be shown by Reason not only that there was one God but that this one God was in some sense three. But unlike Anselm, who very rarely quotes any authors outside of Scripture—unless it be Augustine, and

even him he uses rather than quotes—Abelard constantly seeks his proof of the power of reason to discover that the nature of God is what the Christian creed affirms it to be, in the anticipations of Christian teaching which he finds in the writers of classical antiquity. Thus for the unity of God he appeals to the continuous tradition of philosophy from Pythagoras and Thales onwards as evidencing the success of its investigations; without such success men would have been baffled and ceased to pursue a vain endeavour. The conviction of the existence of one God thus reached was based upon a study of his works. The discovery may, indeed, first have been due to a direct communication from God to our first parents. But Abelard lays no stress on this supposition of a tradition handed down from those to whom such a communication was made. The further an object is from sense, the more is it the proper object of reason. Such a communication as God may be supposed to have made to our first parents would rest on the witness of sense, and not of reason. (Abelard seems here, by the way, to overlook the part played by inference in the interpretation of the sensible medium of such communication.) But it is in virtue of our rational nature that we are said to be made in God's image, and it is natural that our reason should be directed towards him whose image as rational beings we bear. No doubt our reason no more works here than elsewhere without a starting-point in sensible experience. It is in his wonderful works that God discovers to us his greatness; just as we discern the skill of a human artificer, although he be absent, from the character of his works. This Argument from Design is urged by Cicero, the greatest of Latin philosophers,<sup>1</sup> and by Plato, the greatest of all philosophers, in the *Timæus* (the only work of Plato, it must be remembered, to which Abelard had access; he knew it in the translation of Chalcidius). We learn from

<sup>1</sup> *de Invent.* i. 34, § 59.

Augustine (so Abelard continues) that the first to perceive that a divine Mind was the maker of all things was Anaxagoras. By such arguments we conclude that all things in the world are ordered or governed by some one whom we call God. That this orderer or governor is one only we infer from the concord shown in the universe ; which would hardly be, if it had many governors. The more the sameness the greater the concord, the less the concord the less the unity. And so we may argue from the highest degree of concord to the highest degree of sameness and unity in the government. And what applies to government we may extend also to creation ; to secure the greatest excellence in their government when made, they must have been in the making prepared in the way best adapted to that end. So we arrive at one ruler and maker of the universe, God, whom we call good, for how could he be called the Supreme unless he exceeded all things that are good ? His goodness implies his unity. That cannot be good which is superfluous. But another creator or ruler would be superfluous if one was as sufficient as many to account for all the facts. Nor can it be objected to this that what is good is made better by being multiplied. For this argument, logically carried out, would lead to an infinite number of Gods. But an infinite number even divine knowledge cannot comprehend. Nor would any God of this infinite multitude be the Supreme Good, for the multitude of which any one God would be but one, would be a greater good than any one God out of the multitude ; nay, he would not be a good at all, since he would be superfluous, there being an infinite number of others as good as he. Again, the more composite anything is the weaker it is, and this supposed multitude of Gods would be a composite whole, made up of an infinite number of parts. Once more, the rarer anything is, the more precious it is. Such reasons are sufficient, thinks Abelard, to demonstrate the unity of the Godhead whose existence is inferred by the

Argument from Design. He has, however, qualms as to their strictly demonstrative character. They are, he admits, moral (*honestæ*) rather than properly demonstrative (*necessariæ*). In the case of God, however, moral arguments are more appropriate. In the absence of a demonstrative proof either of theism or of its contradictory (although the weight both of reason and of authority are all on the side of the former), a good man cannot refuse to be convinced by the moral arguments for theism. It is impossible, I think, not to be struck with the general resemblance of this final position of Abelard on the question of the existence and unity of God to that of Kant.

But according to Abelard not only God's unity but his trinity also is accessible to reason. He has, he says, learned from St. Augustine that we are bound to expound the Christian doctrine so as to be intelligible to those who possess the capacity of thinking upon such subjects. In the performance of this duty he goes on to declare that the intention of this doctrine is to exhibit God as *Summum bonum atque in omnibus perfectum*, the supreme and absolutely perfect Good. This is done when he is exhibited as Power, Wisdom, and Love. This we do in describing him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Only by so describing God as Power, Wisdom, and Love can we conceive him as the object of our fear (because powerful) and our love (because loving), and as doing well in all that he does (because wise). We are here again reminded of Kant, this time of the doctrine in his treatise on *Religion within the limits of the mere Reason*<sup>1</sup> where a value is allowed to the doctrine of the Trinity on the sole ground of its aptness to express that way of regarding God which is most serviceable in promoting a right moral disposition in us. The doctrine, Abelard continues, may be defended against the Jews and heathen who deny it, by alleging testimonies from books 'wherein

<sup>1</sup> iii. 2 ; *Werke*, ed. Hartenstein, vi. pp. 244 ff.

they may perceive that this *distinctio trinitatis*, this threeness in the Godhead, is proclaimed to all men, the divine inspiration having deigned to reveal it both to the Jews by the prophets and to the Gentiles by the philosophers, that so the perfection of the Supreme Good might be acknowledged by both peoples and both be thus called to the worship of one God, from whom and by whom and in whom are all things'. To deny the doctrine of the Trinity to be intelligible is to fall into the error of Montanus, who taught that the prophets did not understand what they were talking about, but were merely mechanical instruments of the divine Spirit. Indeed, he goes so far as to assert that the doctrine is actually held, though not in words yet in meaning, not by Christians only but also by all, though they be Jews or heathens, who admit that God made all in wisdom and so believe in his wisdom, which Christians call his Son; and in goodness, and so believe in his goodness, which Christians call his Holy Spirit. Hence it should be an easy task for Christians to convince them that they think the same as Christians, and so that all, whether Christians, Jews, or heathens, have a common faith which, though they do not confess it with their lips as we do because they know not the meaning of the terms we use, yet in their heart they already hold it as it is written, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'<sup>1</sup>

We see here that there is a disagreement between Anselm and Abelard as well as an agreement; they both held that Reason can demonstrate the Trinity of the Godhead; but Anselm would scarcely have allowed that it is really held in common with Christians, though less explicitly expressed, by Jews and by heathen theists. He did not share Abelard's preoccupation with the difficulty of understanding how the Christian doctrine of God could be really capable of rational proof and yet fail to commend itself to any who were not

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 10.



members of the particular community in which it was authoritatively taught. Abelard saw that this difficulty would be removed if it were shown that it had actually commended itself to others ; hence his interest in collecting non-Christian witnesses to it. And this interest became an interest in those non-Christian witnesses ; and led to a marked unwillingness to look upon them as mere outsiders, ' children of wrath ', incapable of salvation. He begins, tentatively enough, to excuse his frequent appeals to their authority. Whatever their faults in practice, he says, we may use their teaching as we do, for example, Solomon's, notwithstanding his lapse from morality and true religion. God sometimes allows even reprobates to work miracles and to prophesy, for the profit of others, if not for their own ; just as, according to the regular teaching of the Church unworthy ministers could perform efficacious sacramental acts. But we need not look upon the ancient philosophers as reprobates. Lest we should despair altogether of the philosophers or condemn as reprobate the lives of all those who lived before the Incarnation of our Lord, let us listen to the blessed Jerome,<sup>1</sup> who, in interpreting the passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew<sup>2</sup> where the unprofitable servant says to his master that he knows him to be one who reaps where he did not sow and gathers where he did not scatter, takes it to signify God's acceptance of the good life of heathen philosophers. The best of them do not fall under the censure passed by St. Paul<sup>3</sup> on those who ' knowing God, glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools '. Thus Socrates, according to St. Augustine,<sup>4</sup> taught that those who would follow philosophy must be fitted by the moral blamelessness of their lives to seek out

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in Ev. Matt.* lib. iv. c. 25 (Migne, *P. L.* xxvi. 188).

<sup>2</sup> xxv. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *de C. D.* viii. 3.

those first causes of things which he thought to lie in the will of the one Supreme God ; and Plato in the persons of Socrates and Timaeus <sup>1</sup> (or, as Abelard says, in the first book of the *Republic*—he had not, we must remember, the *Republic* itself before him) that the divine assistance must be invoked at the outset of philosophical inquiry. The lawfulness of studying the philosophers and even the poets of antiquity is earnestly defended. He is at pains to discount the famous vision of St. Jerome,<sup>2</sup> in which he was driven with blows (the traces of which he found on his body after waking) from the judgement-seat of Christ, as no Christian but a Ciceronian. Jerome's fault was not that he studied Cicero, but that he studied him from sheer delight in his eloquence, not for any useful purpose, and that he neglected the Holy Scriptures for him.

Whatever any of the Fathers may say, in Abelard's judgement no reading is forbidden, not even that of the poets (whom not only the Fathers disapproved, but Plato excluded from his ideal commonwealth), so it be used aright and not preferred to what is better. Let no one call any knowledge evil, even the knowledge of evil. That too must the good man have, not that he may do evil but that he may be on his guard against it. If knowledge of evil were itself evil we should have to condemn God himself, who knows all things, evil as well as good. Those saints have ever been the most eminent for sacred learning who have been before their conversion better scholars in secular learning. Paul was not a better apostle than Peter, nor Augustine more of a confessor than Martin, but they were better sacred as they had been better secular scholars. Some good things come out of evil (e. g. penitence and correction), some evil out of good (e. g. envy and pride). We must not, by blaming what is good instead of the bad use of it, incur the guilt of those who 'call evil good and good evil ; who put darkness for light and light for darkness'.

<sup>1</sup> *Tim.* 27 B. C.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* xxii. 30.

Heathen witness to the doctrine of the Trinity, or at least to that of a divine Son of God, he finds abundant ; in Mercury,<sup>1</sup> in Plato, in the Sibyl (whose prophecies are quoted by Lactantius and St. Augustine), and in Virgil. Two Kings add their testimony, Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel, and Didymus, or Dindamis, King of the Brahmins, whose apocryphal correspondence with Alexander the Great was a favourite book with the scholars of the twelfth century.

Seneca speaks of the Holy Spirit in a letter to St. Paul,<sup>2</sup> and Boethius, whom Abelard here calls the greatest of Latin philosophers—elsewhere he calls Cicero so—has actually written a treatise on the Trinity.<sup>3</sup> With all this witness from philosophers, the heathen are, thinks Abelard, inexcusable in rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, as also are the Jews in view of the witness borne to it by their own prophets. In finding an anticipation of the Christian doctrine of God in Plato, Abelard was simply following in the steps of Augustine. That Father had gone so far as to state that the whole doctrine of the Word, as given in the Prologue to St. John's Gospel down to the words ' And the Word was made flesh ', he had found in the books of the Platonists ; the doctrine of the Word's Incarnation, however, he did not find there.<sup>4</sup> Now the Platonic (or, as we should say, Neo-Platonic) Trinity was that of the Supreme Good or One, the Reason or Word, and the Soul of the World, the

<sup>1</sup> i. e. Hermes Trismegistus, whom he regards as the oldest of all philosophers. He derived his information concerning him from St. Augustine.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep. ad Paulum*, vii. The apocryphal correspondence of Seneca and Paul (to be found printed at the end of the Teubner edition of Seneca) is very ancient, though, if it were genuine, as it is not, it would be very unworthy of the two great men to whom it is attributed.

<sup>3</sup> It is true that Boethius, if he was really, as he may quite possibly have been, the writer of the treatise in question, could not be reckoned as a heathen ; still, as the author of the *Consolatio Philosophiæ* he plainly belonged to the succession of the heathen philosophers.

<sup>4</sup> *Conf.* vii. 9.

principle of which could be traced in the *Timaeus* itself, though, no doubt, as developed in Neo-Platonism, both Aristotelian and Stoic elements were taken up into the Platonic doctrine along with those which really belonged to Plato himself. The notice of Augustine had been attracted mainly by the Platonic or Neo-Platonic anticipation—(or if we prefer to say so, origin—neither word expresses the whole truth)—of the Church's doctrine of the Logos or Word of God. Thus the identification of the Divine Reason of Greek philosophy with the Second Person of the Christian Trinity enjoyed high ecclesiastical authority; but less had been said of the relation of the *Anima Mundi* or Soul of the World to the Third Person of the Christian Trinity. To this Abelard devoted his attention, and it soon appeared that his speculations on the subject would afford a ready handle to a man like St. Bernard, with the instincts of the heresy-hunter, always on the watch for heterodox novelties.

We may pursue this matter a little further. Abelard in the course of collecting his heathen witnesses to the Christian doctrine of God mentions that Claudian—(that is, not the poet of Stilicho but the fifth-century writer Claudianus Mamertus)<sup>1</sup>—had found in the Platonic *Anima Mundi* the Holy Ghost of the Christian Creed. And, says Abelard, as the life and health of all the faithful the Holy Ghost may properly be called the Soul of the World. He proceeds to defend at length the thesis of the correspondence of these two notions. Thus when Plato in the *Timaeus*<sup>2</sup> says that the substance of the soul is at once *individua* and *dividua* we may see a reference to the divine simplicity of the Holy Spirit as he is in himself and the multiplicity of his gifts of grace, as he manifests himself in the creation and government of the world. The sayings of the philosophers who follow Plato concerning the *Anima Mundi* can only be justified if understood of the Holy Spirit; their figures of

<sup>1</sup> *de Statu Animae*, ii. 7. .

<sup>2</sup> 35 A.

speech are but part of that general habit common to philosophers and prophets of expressing high truth in words which on the surface are vain and fabulous. Taken literally the doctrine that the world is a living being is absurd, but, if we may understand the Holy Ghost where the *Anima Mundi* is mentioned, the words of Macrobius concerning the latter<sup>1</sup> will be found to contain just what Christians hold. The words of philosophers are no more abused by such interpretations of their meaning than those of Caiaphas,<sup>2</sup> when he said it was expedient that one man should die for the people, not suspecting what the Holy Spirit had meant by putting these words into his mouth.<sup>3</sup> As to Plato, Abelard recalls the legend of the bees which swarmed upon his lips in infancy, and treats it as a miracle by which God showed that he intended through him to reveal the mysteries of his divine nature. Plato was indeed in error, Abelard says here, in making the *Anima Mundi* have a beginning and be inferior to God and the Reason (*Nous*). Later on however in the same book, he finds means to reconcile Plato with the teaching of the Church. The term 'creation' used by Macrobius, reporting Plato, of the origin of the *Anima Mundi*, as previously of the *Nous* itself, is not to be taken literally; but if this be granted, in what he says of the origin of the *Anima Mundi* from the *Nous* and of the *Nous* from the Supreme Good, he is at one with Christian (or at least with Latin Christian) orthodoxy, which derives the Son from the Father and the Holy Spirit from the Son also, though in neither case by way of creation. The *Anima*

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in Somm. Scip.* i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> John xviii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> This readiness to find an uncomprehended meaning in the words of philosophers and prophets is, we may observe, scarcely consistent with the rejection in the *Dialogue* of the Montanist theory of mechanical inspiration; but I do not think we need doubt Abelard's authorship of the *Dialogue* on account of this incidental inconsistency with an undoubted work of his—the so-called *Introductio ad Theologiam* in which the passage I am now discussing occurs.



*Mundi*, which is the Holy Ghost, the *anima animarum nostrarum*, is said indeed by Macrobius to have a beginning ; but this is explained as meaning no more than that under this aspect, as giving life to creation, the Holy Ghost, although in his own essence co-eternal with the Father and the Son, did begin to be ; as *Anima* (a *nomen officii*) he *has* a beginning, as *Spiritus* (a *nomen naturae*) he has not. In this way Platonism and Christianity are reconciled. The strictures of St. Bernard on this reconciliation are contained in his treatise, addressed to Pope Innocent II, *On the Errors of Abelard*, where among a number of minor heresies which he detects in his great contemporary's theology, he mentions this, 'that the Holy Ghost is the Soul of the World, that the World, as Plato said, was by so much the more excellent an animal than any other that it had a better soul (*anima*) than any other, to wit the Holy Ghost. Here he is at great pains to prove Plato a Christian ; but he only succeeds in proving himself a heathen.'

It is curious to notice how soon (as I have already indicated, when speaking of Abelard's influence on theological speculation), despite the zeal with which St. Bernard, the most influential ecclesiastic of his day, pursued one whose independent and critical attitude towards the tradition of the Church appeared to him fraught with the gravest danger to religion, theology took upon itself, even in quite orthodox quarters, an Abelardian colour. The effect of St. Bernard's activity was seen not in any success in repelling the influence of Abelard, but in the imperfect acknowledgement, among those who had profoundly undergone that influence, of the source from which it came. It is noticeable that a work *On Philosophy* by William of Conches, which even a passing glance is enough to show is not independent of Abelard in its doctrine of the Trinity, was attributed sometimes to Honorius of Autun at the beginning

of the twelfth century, sometimes to William of Hirschau in the eleventh, sometimes even to Bede in the eighth. It is printed (in different recensions) among the works of all in Migne's *Patrologia*; and it was reserved to Mr. R. L. Poole<sup>1</sup> to put its true authorship (which had long been generally recognized) beyond all reasonable doubt. It is noticeable that in this book the identification of the *Anima Mundi* with the Holy Ghost—'since from the divine will and goodness which is the Holy Spirit all things which live in the world have their life'—is mentioned without any trace of disapproval, as the first of three explanations of the *Anima Mundi* which are given by different expositors. The same author, however, in another work, his Commentary on Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*, extracts from which have been printed by Jourdain, goes (as Mr. Poole<sup>2</sup> has pointed out) far beyond Abelard himself in the identification which Abelard had suggested, and to which St. Bernard so much objected. For, having explained that by the *Anima Mundi* is meant *naturalis vigor quo habent quaedam res tantum moveri, quaedam crescere, quaedam sentire, quaedam discernere*, he pronounces emphatically as his own opinion that *ille vigor naturalis est Spiritus Sanctus*.<sup>3</sup>

The last days of Abelard were spent as we saw at Cluny

<sup>1</sup> *Illustrations of Mediaeval Thought*, App. v, p. 338 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> The identification of the Platonic *Anima Mundi* with the Holy Spirit of Christian theology is expressly rejected in Abelard's *Liber Divisionum*, printed by Cousin as (along with the *Liber Definitionum*) constituting the fifth part of its author's *Dialectica*. See *Ouvrages inédits d'Abélard*, p. 475. Cousin (*op. cit.* p. xxxv) supposes that we have here a direct repudiation by Abelard of a view which he had previously favoured, and on account of which he had been censured; and suggests that it was written by him in the days of his retirement at Cluny, after his condemnation at Sens. This hypothesis, however, conflicts (as Cousin himself saw) with Cousin's other supposition that the treatise in which it occurs formed part of the *Dialectica* quoted at an earlier date by Abelard in the *Theologia Christiana*. Though the point would bear further investigation, I should be disposed to place the passage now under discussion earlier than the theological treatises which take a more favourable view of the identification of Plato's Soul of the World with the Holy Spirit, and assign it to the

under the protection of its eminent abbot, Peter the Venerable, by whose efforts he was (as Peter himself tells Heloïse in his letter written to her after her husband's death) restored before the end to the favour of the Holy See. Peter the Venerable was a man of great learning and was the first Western scholar to make it his business to study Mohammedanism with a view to its refutation. When in Spain with Alfonso 'the Emperor' (who reigned 1126-57) he caused a translation of the Koran into Latin, which still exists in MS., to be made by a certain Englishman named Robert, who was residing there as a student of astronomy and astrology; he wrote a book against the Saracens, which we still have; and he also commissioned Pedro of Toledo to make a version of a disputation between a certain Saracen and a certain Christian of Arabia on the points of issue between Islam and Christianity. To quote Vincent of Beauvais, who in his *Speculum Historiale*<sup>1</sup> gives some extracts from this last-mentioned work, 'both these were philosophers of repute and perfect in the doctrine of

period preceding that at which Abelard turned from dialectic to theology. If the phraseology which seemed to make the *Anima Mundi* a creature of God instead of coeternal with him had at first appeared to Abelard to exclude the identification thereof with the Holy Spirit, we can readily understand why he is at such pains in the *Introductio ad Theologiam* to explain that phraseology away. The end of the earliest extant theological treatise, the *Tractatus de unitate et trinitate divina*, published by Stölzle in 1891, is lost; but from the table of contents we learn that it, like its successors, contained an explanation *quomodo Plato animam mundi quam spiritum intellexit, vult creatam esse; hoc est initium habere*. As to the writers against whom the strictures in the *Liber Divisionum* are directed—*nonnulli catholicorum qui, allegoriae nimis adhaerentes, sanctae Trinitatis fidem in hac consideratione Platoni conantur adscribere, cum videlicet ex summo Deo, quem Tagaton appellant, Noi naturam intellexerunt quasi Filium ex Patre genitum, ex Noi vero animam mundi esse quasi ex Filio Spiritum sanctum procedere*—they probably belonged, as Cousin supposed, to the school of Bernard of Chartres. It is observable that Bernard Silvester's poem *De universitate mundi* (written in the pontificate of Eugenius III, after Abelard's death), while identifying the *Noys* with the Son, avoids identifying the *Anima Mundi* with the Holy Ghost.

<sup>1</sup> xxiii. 40 seq.

their own sects. They belonged to the household of Emirhilmominus, King of the Saracens, and were not only acquaintances, but intimate friends.' Emirhilmominus is not, as Vincent probably thought, a proper name. It is only an attempt to represent *Amir al Maumeni*, Commander of the Faithful. This seems to place the original dialogue before 1016, when the Caliphate in Spain came to an end ; perhaps it may belong to the reign of the tolerant Hakim II, in the second half of the tenth century. Peter the Venerable, it is to be noted, dedicated Robert's version of the Koran to St. Bernard ; for St. Bernard's lack of sympathy with Abelard's tendency to reconcile the tenets of Christianity with those of other religions naturally did not prevent his being deeply interested in the refutation of Mohammedanism and in the conversion of Mohammedans to Christianity. Peter the Venerable's attitude to Abelard shows, however, that he was of a different temper from his canonized contemporary ; and indeed he had himself engaged in controversy with him over the relations between the Cluniac monks of whom Peter was the head, and the Cistercian order of which Bernard was, though not the official head, yet by far the most prominent member.

We may take our leave of Abelard by summing up what we have found especially noticeable in his treatment of the problems of Natural Theology and by indicating his position with regard to its subsequent development. Unlike Anselm, who thinks for himself indeed, but thinks as it were from within the sanctuary of orthodox tradition, unconcerned, for the most part, with the theories and opinions of those without, and intent only on comprehending, so far as he may, the full meaning of the experience which was embodied in the tradition and had been verified in his own spiritual life, Abelard, inheriting the same tradition, approaches it rather in a spirit of intellectual curiosity, drawn as he was to a Churchman's life in the first place not by the desire

to satisfy the needs of a devotional spirit, but because it was in his day the most natural one for a student.

I must, however, here return for a few moments to a subject on which I have already touched in passing. Although we may thus find in Abelard, especially when we compare and contrast him with Anselm, a temper which we may fairly call rationalistic, it would be a mistake to find in him, as some have done, a formal repudiation of the claim of revelation to command assent. We saw<sup>1</sup> that when a writer in the *Church Quarterly Review*<sup>2</sup> ascribes to him the express assertion of a relation between faith and understanding opposed to that stated in Anselm's saying *Credo ut intelligam* he is going beyond his data. He was probably relying on summaries of Abelard's view, which he would have found reason to suspect, had he studied the back numbers of the *Review* in which he was writing. As long ago as October 1895 an article appeared on Abelard in that very magazine, which, though anonymous, it is an open secret came from the pen of Mr. Poole, and in which it was shown that the suspicions expressed by Dr. Deutsch in 1883 as to the text of a certain passage in the *Introductio ad Theologiam*, which, as it stands in Cousin, is very startling, but also scarcely translatable, are confirmed by a reference to the Balliol MS. of the work. As it appears in Cousin's edition, this passage (after some observations on a remark of St. Gregory the Great<sup>3</sup> to the effect that 'there is no merit in a faith based on human reason', observations which, as in Cousin's text, they can scarcely, if at all, be made to construe, one may interpret as one pleases) ends with the truly trenchant saying 'Not because God had said it, is a thing believed, but because it is proved to be so, is it received'. Mr. Poole himself

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. H. H. Kelly on 'The Rise and Course of Scholasticism', *C. Q. R.* for January 1913.

<sup>3</sup> *Hom. in Evang.* xxvi. § 1.



in an earlier work <sup>1</sup> had quoted this as a saying of Abelard's which must have scandalized orthodox contemporaries. But even in Cousin's text it is difficult to understand how such a saying could occur in the context. And the Balliol MS., which shows that by a homoeoteleuton a line has dropped out of the sentence before, reduces the whole passage to something much more commonplace than it seemed. Abelard merely says that Gregory does not by his remark intend to condemn all reasoning about the faith (which would be inconsistent with his own reasonings in support of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body), but only to declare that there was no merit in faith which is obtained by human reasoning without divine testimony where we believe a thing merely on grounds of human reason, not because it is revealed by God. Abelard, in other words, is making no startling claim for reasoning to precedence over revelation as a ground of assent. He is on the contrary admitting the superior merit of faith in revelation over merely rational conviction, while denying that, by asserting this, St. Gregory was disputing the legitimacy of using human reason in the discussion and investigation of the truths revealed.

But though we cannot find in Abelard any such revolutionary view of the relations of reason and revelation as he has sometimes been credited with, he is none the less, especially as compared with Anselm, a rationalist in spirit, and this more pronouncedly, perhaps, in the latest form of his great theological treatise (unfortunately called in Cousin's edition *Introductio ad Theologiam*) as compared with the earlier (which was called by Cousin *Theologia Christiana*) and the yet earlier one condemned at Soissons, which was recovered by Dr. Stölzle and published by him as *De unitate et trinitate diuina*. The spirit of Rationalism thus obtained in Abelard a footing in Latin theology which had the most important

<sup>1</sup> *Illustrations of Mediaeval Thought*, p. 153.

results for the future of European thought. The Reformation in the sixteenth century was in one of its aspects, and that not the least important, a protest against the prevalence of Rationalism in the mediaeval Schools ; although in another aspect it was an outcome of the Nominalism to which that Rationalism inevitably led. Hence when Luther, who saw in Reason an 'evil beast',<sup>1</sup> expressed his preference for Bernard above all the other saints of the Middle Ages,<sup>2</sup> one feels that this was not unnatural, although he was certainly not thinking of, and probably was not acquainted with, the history of the pertinacious opposition which Bernard had offered to the father of mediaeval rationalism.

Although Abelard stands, as we have seen, with Anselm and not with Thomas Aquinas in that he refuses to draw a line between the doctrine of the divine Unity and that of the divine Trinity as belonging to the spheres of Natural and Revealed Theology respectively, yet in his interest, which was foreign to Anselm, in the relation of the theologies of other religions to the Christian he is a pioneer of the movement which resulted in the drawing of that line, so soon as the thought of men who believed in the Unity but not in the Trinity became through the translations of the Arabian commentators on Aristotle part of the intellectual heritage of the scholars of Western Europe.

I have occasionally pointed out in my survey of Abelard's contributions to Natural Theology and I now just call attention once more to the noticeable affinity between the thought of this founder of European rationalism in theology with that of the thinker in whom it may be said to culminate, Immanuel Kant. With Abelard as with Kant, that alone is valued and emphasized in the traditional dogma which has significance for the promotion of good conduct. Like Kant he is a moralist and not a mystic,

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in Gal.* iii. 6 (*Opp.* t. v. p. 334 b).

<sup>2</sup> *Comm. in Gal.* iv. 31 (*Opp.* t. v. 400 a).

though there was in his temperament an element of poetry to which Kant's presents no parallel. This showed itself not only in the last love-songs in which he 'honoured and renowned' Heloïse, but in his religion too. The great hymn *O quanta qualia sunt illa gaudia* ('Oh what their joy and their glory shall be') could certainly never have been written by the philosopher of Königsberg.

## IV

### ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

WE have studied a representative of Natural Theology in the eleventh century—Anselm, and a representative of it in the twelfth—Abelard. We have now to turn to a representative of it in the thirteenth—Thomas Aquinas. It is within that century that the brief career of the Angelic Doctor falls. The exact year of his birth is uncertain; the accounts vary between 1225 and 1227. He was of a noble family, from the neighbourhood of the same Italian city not far from Naples as had been already made illustrious by the birth of Juvenal. He became a friar of the order of St. Dominic in 1243, and in 1245 a pupil of the great teacher of that order, Albert the Great, afterwards Bishop of Regensburg or Ratisbon, who survived by some years his yet more celebrated disciple. He himself taught first at Cologne, then at Paris, and eventually at Naples, from 1248 till his death, which took place in 1274, while he was still under 50. Although his interests were less encyclopaedic than his master Albert's, his was a mind of great compass and of singular constructive power; sober rather than venturesome in speculation, yet without any fear of dealing logically and realistically with any questions which might naturally present themselves in the course of his investigations, and without any thought of leaving some on one side as intractable to reason to be played upon by vague and irresponsible fancy or aspiration. Poetic power can certainly not be denied to the writer of the *Lauda Sion* and others of the hymns which he composed in honour of the newly established festival of Corpus Christi. Yet these impressive productions, in which an accurate theology becomes

what Milton<sup>1</sup> said that Poetry should be, simple and passionate, must be reckoned in what Palgrave calls<sup>2</sup> 'a peculiar class of Poetry—that written by thoughtful men who practise that art but little'—men whom it would not naturally occur to us to describe as poets. Nor, although he was a great student of the Areopagite, who was reckoned as the chief master of mystical theology, and though according to an early biographer he was subject to trances,<sup>3</sup> was the temperament of Thomas Aquinas that which is usually intended by the word 'mystical'.

Yet, if himself neither poet nor mystic, his system was found full of inspiration both by Dante in his poetry and by Master Eckhart in his mysticism. Natural Theology he does not treat apart under that name; but he wrote, before composing his great *Summa Theologiae*, a lesser *Summa contra Gentiles*, in which he has ever in mind the objections to the doctrines of Christianity which were or might be raised by writers owing no allegiance to the Christian name. For the views of such writers he had not to rely only upon his imagination or upon the reports of Christians. He had before him, as neither Anselm nor Abelard had, the works of Aristotle which treated of God, of the world-order and of the soul; and also the commentaries thereon of the Mohammedan Averroes; not to speak of the works of other Mohammedan philosophers, such as Avicenna. The attitude of St. Thomas towards the former of these two 'Saracens' is reflected in the *Divine Comedy*, where<sup>4</sup> the Commentator is found with the Philosopher, Averroes with Aristotle (and not, we may be sure, as a stranger to him like the commentators in Swift's *Laputa* <sup>5</sup>), in that region of shadowed happiness

<sup>1</sup> *Tractate on Education*, § 6.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Golden Treasury*, commenting on Francis Bacon's verses, 'The world's a bubble'.

<sup>3</sup> Guglielmo di Tocco, viii, § 48, in *Acta SS.*, Mart. i. 674; cp. Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Inferno*, iv. 144.

<sup>5</sup> *Voyage to Laputa*, c. 8: 'I soon discovered that both of them (i.e.



in which the heroes and sages of antiquity dwell, untouched by infernal pains but yet shut out from celestial bliss.

The *Summa contra Gentiles* may be considered the central work of the Middle Ages on Natural Theology, and as such deserves a close study from students of Natural Theology, and I shall proceed now to call attention to some of its most remarkable statements.

Very early in the first Book Thomas points out two difficulties which he found to beset his enterprise of refuting the errors of unbelievers. The first of these is an imperfect acquaintance with their views. Here he and his contemporaries are necessarily at a disadvantage compared with the primitive teachers of Christianity, who had been heathens themselves and could argue from the standpoint which had once been their own and was still that of those against whom they were writing. The second is that the appeal to scriptural authority, which can be used in controversy with Jews or heretics, is here of no avail, since it is unrecognized by Mohammedans and pagans. Hence it is necessary to fall back on 'natural reason', which in things divine is insufficient. He is thus, we see, much more distrustful than Abelard had been of the competence of 'natural reason'. In the third chapter he makes it plain where he would draw the line between the sphere in which 'natural reason' is competent and that in which it will fail us. The existence and unity of God belong to the former, the trinity in unity to the latter. This distinction is made to depend upon the principle that only knowledge obtained by or inferable from sensible experience is possible to man; and that, while the existence of God can be inferred from things which the senses perceive, his essential nature cannot. Yet what our reason could not discover for itself has been revealed to us through the ministry of angels, and to this

Homer and Aristotle) were perfect strangers to the rest of the company (their commentators), and had never seen or heard of them before.'

we should be as foolish to refuse credence as an unlearned man would be to disbelieve a philosopher telling him things he could not have found out by himself. He should rather regard the little he can learn concerning such exalted beings as those of which revelation informs him as preferable to more extensive knowledge of beings less exalted ; according to a principle laid down in reference to the stars by Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> The revelation in question was authenticated by miracles transcending the power of any but a supernatural agency to effect. The greatest of these miracles is the conversion of men of all kinds, wise and simple alike, to a doctrine which promises no carnal or worldly pleasures, and that in the face of persecution ; and that this conversion was predetermined by God is proved by prophecies of it in books still extant. The religion of Mahomet can produce no such evidences ; for it promises carnal pleasures to its followers, while it can allege no undoubted prophecies and no supernatural signs. This contrast between the evidences of Christianity and of Mohammedanism follows the lines laid down in the controversial works circulated or written by Peter the Venerable of Cluny, Abelard's friend and protector, of whom I have already spoken in my account of Abelard.<sup>2</sup> The contents of revelation, though not discoverable by the unassisted reason, cannot, however, be contrary to the principles or laws of natural reason, which proceed from the same God.

Turning to the rational proofs of God's existence, Thomas does not regard a proof of the kind alleged by Anselm (whose name he does not mention) in the *Proslogion*, and now generally called ontological, as sufficient for its purpose. He begins his discussion of this sort of proof by stating it in a form different from that which Anselm gave it ; namely, as a contention that God's existence is so self-evident that its opposite is inconceivable. The plausibility of this

<sup>1</sup> *De Partibus Animalium*, i. 5. 644 b. 31 ff.

<sup>2</sup> p. 227.

argument arises, in Thomas's judgement, from the long familiarity of all men with the name of God as heard and invoked in worship. But the fact that there is in the mind a notion corresponding to this name proves only a notional not a real existence of God. Then quoting, though (as I said) without reference to Anselm's name, Anselm's phrase *id quo majus cogitari non potest*, he denies that this supreme object of thought need have more than a notional existence, or that there is necessarily anything actually existent 'than which no greater can be conceived'. By this argument, then, he holds it impossible to meet the denial of God's existence. In the following century Durand (Durand de St. Pourçain), who died in 1334, a predecessor of Bossuet in the see of Meaux, reinforced<sup>1</sup> Thomas's arguments on this head with express reference to Anselm. He attempts, however, to minimize the insistence of Anselm himself on the self-evidence of the existence of God. Thus he represents Anselm as putting forward the Ontological Argument, not absolutely, but only as a consequence from the assumption of certain premisses. These premisses are (1) that 'God' signifies 'that than which no greater can be conceived' and (2) that that which cannot be supposed not to exist is thereby conceived of as greater than that which can be so supposed. He admits that Anselm doubtless thought these statements themselves self-evident. With the same design Durandus also presses the word *credimus* in the passage in which Anselm says, addressing God, 'we believe thee to be that than which no greater can be conceived'; as though Anselm made the whole argument consequent on an act of faith as distinguished from knowledge. The criticism of Durandus thus avoids a direct condemnation of Anselm's teaching, but at the cost of taking his argument as something of far less significance than he had himself regarded it as being. It is noticeable that

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in Sent.* Lib. I, dist. 3, qu. 3, ed. Antw., 1567, p. 22.

Descartes,<sup>1</sup> in reviving the Ontological Argument, thinks it necessary to attempt to distinguish it as revived by him from that of which St. Thomas was held to have shown the insufficiency. All genuine arguments for God's existence take their start, according to Thomas, from sensible facts of which God is inferred to be the cause. First among them he places those used by Aristotle in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.<sup>2</sup> Of these he reckons three. There is first the proof of an unmoved first Mover. This he holds to be compatible with Plato's proof of a self-moving source of motion,<sup>3</sup> Plato using *motus* in a wider sense than Aristotle, and not limiting it with Aristotle to motion in the sense in which only bodies are capable of it. Secondly there is the proof of a first efficient cause, and lastly the proof of a most True or Real from the consideration that we can say of two false statements that one is more false than the other. Next to these is mentioned the proof from the order of the world, for which he quotes St. John of Damascus, the eighth-century theologian of the Eastern Church, in his great work *de fide orthodoxa*,<sup>4</sup> which a translation by Burgundio of Pisa had made known in the twelfth century to the theologians of the west; and also the commentary of Averroes on Aristotle's *Physics*.<sup>5</sup> To use the later phraseology, familiar from Kant's discussion in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Thomas uses the Physicotheological Argument and the Cosmological Argument, but rejects the Ontological. To his view then Kant's contention that the Ontological Argument is really involved in the use of others to prove what they are supposed to prove will be, if sound, peculiarly damaging. He is much in earnest with the view that God's existence can be proved; that it is not merely to be held as matter of faith in what is revealed. The arguments

<sup>1</sup> *Resp. ad primas Objectiones*.    <sup>2</sup> See *Phys.* vii, viii, and *Met.* A, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Phaedr.* 245 D. Thomas's information concerning this argument of Plato came from Averroes on Aristotle's *Physics*.

<sup>4</sup> i. 3.

<sup>5</sup> in *Phys.* ii. 75 (i. e. c. 8. 198 b 10).

which he holds capable of proving it prove at any rate directly only a necessary being capable of causing the order which we observe in nature. But Thomas goes on to argue that a being that can be so described must have certain attributes such as eternity, activity, simplicity. He mentions here a view held by the heretic David of Dinan, whose writings were condemned at a council held at Paris in 1210,<sup>1</sup> that God and the *prima materia* could not be distinguished, since both were *simple*. For they could only be distinguished if there were assignable differences between them: but then they could not be simple since there would be in them a point of identity (viz. their simplicity) with distinguishing points of difference. To this Thomas replies that God and *prima materia* agree in nothing; they are merely *diverse*, not *different* in the sense in which differences imply an identity within which they fall.

With respect to David of Dinan<sup>2</sup> he is said to have been at one time in favour with Pope Innocent III. His doctrine was that no distinction could be made between the three things which are *simple*, viz., God, the Noys or Intelligence, and the Primal Matter. It is doubtful how far, if at all, he was influenced by John the Scot. There are passages in the latter in which he may have found support for his views; and the title of his lost book *De tomis*, which presumably means *On Divisions*, looks as if it might have been suggested by John the Scot's *De divisione Naturae*. We know for certain that this latter book was studied at the time and that it was to a great extent the source of the pantheistic heresy of Amalric or Amaury of Bene in the diocese of Chartres, whose dead body and the living bodies of ten of his followers were burned at Paris in 1210. The reading of both David and Amaury (as well as of Aristotle's *Meta-*

<sup>1</sup> See Denifle, *Chart. Univ. Paris*, i. 70.

<sup>2</sup> We do not know whether he derives his designation from the Breton Dinan or the Belgian Dinant.



*physics* and *Physics*) was forbidden at Paris in 1215,<sup>1</sup> and in 1225 Honorius III<sup>2</sup> ordered the suppression of the chief work of John the Scot, which had proved from an orthodox point of view so mischievous in its results. And, indeed, it would seem that the Pantheism of the Amalricians had led them to an antinomian neglect of moral distinctions. The then fashionable doctrine of three ages: the Age of the Father, which had preceded the advent of Christ; the Age of the Son, which had continued from his advent to that time; and a third age, the Age of the Spirit, now opening (a doctrine taught also by the famous seer Abbot Joachim, of Flores in Calabria, and taken up later by the spiritual Franciscans), they so interpreted as to represent the Third Person of the Trinity as incarnate in themselves. Although not unaware that an author of great weight with him, the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite, had taught<sup>3</sup> that negations were more properly predicates of God than affirmatives, Thomas has himself no love for putting the matter thus, and would certainly not have assented to the position which John the Scot did not shrink from taking up on the basis of this doctrine of the Areopagite (whose works he was the first to translate into Latin) that God might be described as Nothing, so that the 'nothing' out of which things are said to have been created was in fact the divine nature.<sup>4</sup> That anything was created out of the divine nature as its material cause was, we remember, a view repudiated by Anselm<sup>5</sup> (without mention of its having been held by John the Scot, with whose works indeed we saw no reason to suppose him acquainted); and it is plain that it is a view which made it difficult for the theologian using the traditional terminology of the Christian Church to distinguish between the Logos and the

<sup>1</sup> *Chart Univ. Paris*, i. 78, 79.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. *Cael. Hier.* 2 § 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Monologion*, c. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* i. 106, 107.

<sup>5</sup> See *de Div. Nat.* iii. 19.

World. This difficulty is, of course, a familiar one in the history of speculative theology ; but John the Scot was not afraid of it. The eternal reality of the world is for him the content of the Logos ; and its appearance in time, which may be called its creation, is so treated as to be easily confounded with the Incarnation of the Logos. Such a thorough-going doctrine of divine immanence was quite uncongenial to Thomas ; and for him there is nothing really in common between God who is *actus purus* and *prima materia* which is *potentia pura* ; and herein he showed himself a loyal Aristotelian. God again is not, so Thomas argues, to be called the *esse formale* of all things ; for no universal, and still less 'being', the most abstract of all universals, can exist independently except in the abstracting mind ; but God certainly is no mere abstraction ; nor is he the form or soul of any body, and so not of the heaven or of the universe. Thomas thus decisively rejects that identification of the *Anima Mundi* (and indeed a recognition of an *Anima Mundi* is no part of his thoroughly Aristotelian system) with the divine Spirit, which had brought, as we have seen above, such odium upon Abelard. His remarks on the subject are worth quoting as showing a penetrating comprehension of the real difference between Christianity and the type of religion which was its final opponent in the ancient world. He observes that the heathens who made God the Soul of the World found in that position a justification for idolatry, saying that the World was God in virtue, not indeed of its material frame, but of its Soul ; and that divine worship might reasonably be paid to it, and to its parts (namely, the stars and elements) on that account ; and Averroes is quoted as having attributed the star-worship of the Sabaeans or Sabians to a like error.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the notion of Sabianism which we find in mediaeval writers is curious. Briefly, it seems to be this. Mohammed recognized the Sabians as a people possessing a written revelation, and therefore, like the

It is historically interesting to note here how the Aristotelian theology came to serve the purpose here of a theological interest quite different from that of its author. This theological interest was the interest of an ethical conception of God, which is inevitably imperilled where the immanence of God in the world is so pressed that what is of most account in the material system—stars or elements or, in more modern times, forces of nature—come to be represented as the principal manifestations of that which we worship as God. Now an ethical conception of God was something quite alien from Aristotle's theology; and yet it was certainly part of the attraction of that theology to the Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages that it could be used to serve the interest of such a conception better than the Platonic theology, although Plato had himself that interest at heart and Aristotle had not. The reason of this was that Aristotle's God, though neither an ethical nor (in a sense of a being with whom what we can call personal relations are possible) a personal being, was yet thoroughly transcendent, and was thus removed from the danger of identification with Nature and of losing through such identification the ethical and personal character with which Christian religion had invested the object of its worship. And here the Mohammedans, and of course also the Jews,

Jews and Christians, entitled to a measure of toleration not conceded to idolaters. They are supposed to have been a semi-Christian sect. But in the ninth century the people of Harran in Mesopotamia, who were star-worshippers, ingeniously persuaded their Mohammedan conquerors that they were Sabians, and thereby obtained a more favourable treatment than they would otherwise have experienced. So the theory grew up—we find it in the Jewish philosopher Maimonides—that their religion was that ancient religion in which the Patriarch Abraham was bred—he was said, of course, to have come from that region—and which had been the 'natural religion' of the human race before the introduction—by Abraham himself in the first place—of the worship of the one God who was the creator of the heavenly bodies. This account of the Sabians is that given by Chwolsohn in his *Ssabier und der Ssabismus*. See for a summary the article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* by Mr. R. A. Nicholson.

stand on the same side as the Christians against those whom Thomas calls ' the Gentiles '.

The unity of God Thomas proves by several arguments ; we may mention that which turns on the impossibility of there being more than one self-existent Being. Here Thomas fearlessly uses the same reasoning which he did not accept from David of Dinan in respect of the identity of God and the *prima materia*. No doubt he did not regard the common element which would be present in two Gods as one only in the sense that the same negation could be applied to it, but as positively one ; and hence the addition of differences which would distinguish one God from another would be inconsistent with the simplicity which he thinks we must attribute to the divine nature. I may also mention the argument from the unity of the universal movement of the heavens. Thomas does not consider the Gentiles to have been more than nominally polytheistic, since, though speaking of many gods, they believed in one who was supreme among the rest and (he is here thinking of Plato's *Timaeus*) the creator of the others ; and their application to other mortal beings of the title of divinity may be paralleled from Holy Scripture itself. A real denial of the divine unity is rather, he thinks, to be recognized in the Manichaeian theory of two principles. This remark shows, I think, a profound insight into the religious significance of monotheism.

Thomas's proof of the *intelligent* nature of God is interesting. It is, of course, influenced by the Aristotelian doctrine of the origin of the universal movement of the heavens in the attraction exercised by the First Mover as the object of desire ; but it contains some features which are not to be found in Aristotle. Aristotle's view rested upon a distinction between the kind of movement which we find in living things and explain by consciousness in the form of desire, and that which we find in inanimate things

and which implies a mechanical impulse.<sup>1</sup> We should not now so distinguish the two kinds of motion. We should consider that even in motion which was due to desire the energy put forth in the movement could be exactly equated with that acquired in the way of nourishment by the animal, and that this energy is forthwith converted into heat and lost to the mover, who could only put forth the like again after absorbing new energy from without. In other words, a mechanical account could be given of the movement as well when it was due to desire as when due to the impact of another body. At the same time, this mechanical account of all movement does not explain or dispense with the part which consciousness plays in the business; and hence a view which will admit none but a mechanical account is bound to end in paradoxically treating consciousness as a mere otiose 'epiphenomenon'. But still, a movement originated by desire, like that of animals, cannot by us be looked upon in Aristotle's way as excusing us from seeking a further source of energy. No doubt Aristotle himself did not think even animal movement independent (like the movement of the heavens) of stimulation from without. Sense-perception and imagination, which are the prerequisites of desire, are themselves of the nature of motion.<sup>2</sup> Still, the analogy of animal movement is certainly present to his mind when he represents the universal movement as caused by God, himself unmoved, *ὡς ἐρώμενον*, as being an object of love or desire.<sup>3</sup> But, as we have seen, this analogy of animal movement will not aid us in the same way to understand an absolute beginning of all motion in the attraction of a *primum mobile* to a *primum movens* 'as of a lover towards a beloved'.

<sup>1</sup> See *de Motu Animalium*, c. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *De Anima*, i. 410 a 25; ii. 415 b 24, 416 b 34; iii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Met.* A 7, 1072 b 3.



But though Thomas no doubt accepted Aristotle's distinction of the two kinds of movement as it was presented in his writings, without rejecting the error which it involved, the proof which Thomas draws from it that God is an intelligent Being is not dependent on that error, and in an important respect departs from the position of Aristotle himself.

The first point which he makes is that if we suppose God to cause the movement of the universe as the object of desire in a self-moving being, we must think of him as doing this *ut intellectum*, as the object of an *intellectual* desire, which is satisfied by the *knowledge* of its object. Thus that whose apprehension of God sets it in motion (i.e. the spirit which animates the outermost sphere of heaven) must be intelligent, and must become intelligent through its union with that which it knows, with God. Nor can it be supposed that what thus originally excites the intelligence of this highest being after God is itself not intelligent. Moreover, even if we do not allow the *primum mobile* to be thus animated, yet the universe can only be moved by a universal form in its Mover, and a universal form can exist nowhere but in an understanding. All this, although Aristotelian, or at least based on Aristotelian conceptions, yet does not depend on the point in which Aristotle's views about movement are different from those now held by men of science. There is no instance, so Thomas goes on to contend, in which something which sets motion going intelligently is the mere instrument of something which sets it going without intelligence, though the reverse is often the case. Since then among subordinate causes of movement in the world there are many that act with intelligence, the prime cause of all, to whose activity the activity of these subordinate intelligent agents is to be traced back, must surely be itself one that acts with intelligence. This argument, so far as I know, is not directly Aristotelian, but it has nothing in it discordant with

Aristotelian doctrine. It is otherwise with one of those which follow it, and which is closely allied with another already mentioned in passing. What is imperfect presupposes what is perfect; the forms (in the Aristotelian sense) of particular things are imperfect, because they are only present in them in a particularized way; they thus point back to an original which is perfect and not particularized. But forms do not (on Aristotelian principles) exist otherwise than as particularized, except in a mind. Hence their ultimate existence, from which their existence in particulars is derived, must be in the mind of God, and God must thus be intelligent. Though suggested by Aristotelian views, this argument is really discordant with Aristotelian theology, since it gives to the divine Mind as its content the essences of things which are not God and are less than God.

It is true that Thomas does not hold these essences as present to the divine mind to be something alien to, or even as other than, its own essence; but it is at least probable that the Aristotelian conception of God as *νόησις νοήσεως*<sup>1</sup> would not have admitted, even with this saving clause (though one may save the Aristotelian phraseology with the help of it), a knowledge of anything less than God into the divine Mind. It was the aim of Thomas's system to synthesize the Aristotelian with the Christian theology. The Aristotelian theology was already, as we have seen, in agreement with the Christian in affirming God's transcendence; but if the representation of God as personal (in the sense of being such that we can enter into personal relations with him) is to be preserved—and its preservation is essential to Christianity—the extreme Aristotelian transcendence, which allows of no reciprocation on the part of God of the attraction or love towards himself which 'makes the world go round', must be considerably modified. Such a modification we see introduced in the proof of God's intelligence

*Met.* A 9, 1075 a 10.

which I have just cited from Thomas. The conception of the essences of all things as contained in the mind of God was not of course new. The Platonic Ideas had been at least as far back as Philo<sup>1</sup> interpreted in this fashion, and the interpretation, transmitted to the Middle Ages by Augustine,<sup>2</sup> whose philosophy was predominantly Plotinian, both gave the word *Idea* its mediaeval significance and forms the link between its use in Plato and its very different use in modern times for the thoughts and even, with some philosophers, the perceptions and sensations of men.

From Thomas's proof of the intelligence of God we pass to his discussion of the nature of that intelligence. The history of the word *Idea*, to which I have just referred, contains, as I said, a stage in which it is used of a fact of mind, but only of divine or absolute, not of human mind. In Plato Ideas are not facts of mind at all. I do not mean to say that there are no approaches to the view which makes them thoughts of God; primarily, however, they are not facts of mind at all, but objects of knowledge, real essences, the apprehension of which is knowledge. In Augustine, however, they are the content of the divine Mind. Here Augustine was following earlier thinkers and especially Plotinus<sup>3</sup>; but their suggestion was to him of peculiar importance because of the necessity to him as a Christian theologian of finding a place for the Ideas, of the necessity of supposing which he as a convinced Platonist had no doubt, in a system of which a personal God, the sole ultimate principle of all reality, was an essential feature.

The Ideas, eternal and unchangeable essences, could only appear in Christian theology as the contents of the divine Mind, as indeed they already appeared in the Jewish phraseology of Philo; and their relation to the particulars came, naturally enough, to be represented, as indeed we

<sup>1</sup> *de Opificio Mundi*, §§ 5, 48; ed. Cohn i. pp. 6, 48.

<sup>2</sup> See *de Div. Qu.* 83, xlvi.

<sup>3</sup> *Enn.* V. ix. 7.

already find it represented by Seneca,<sup>1</sup> according to the analogy of the relation of the designs in the mind of an artist to the works of his hands. The type of view which we nowadays call Idéalism thus began in a theory of divine, not of human knowledge, among thinkers who made no question of the necessity to our knowledge of an independent object, to which our minds conformed themselves in knowing, and who had no thought of the so-called Copernican revolution in epistemology which Kant believed himself to have effected. But while they found no difficulty whatever in thus making our minds in knowing conform themselves to their objects, they did find a difficulty in representing after this pattern God's knowledge of things that are less than divine. Even to things which are of less value than human minds when taken in themselves, the mind may be regarded without absurdity as subordinating or conforming itself, just in so far as it apprehends them; and this can be understood consistently with an ultimately spiritualistic *Weltanschauung*, if these things be regarded also as works of God. But even this kind of subordination in a particular regard to what is less than God is not lightly attributable to the divine Mind itself. Moreover, for Thomas (although not for Aristotle) God must be regarded as the cause of the existence of these other things that are less than God, as their creator, and their creator out of nothing. No doubt a human being may make things which he has already designed in his mind, and yet afterwards apprehend them by the senses and the understanding as independent objects, no less independent in their existence of his act in apprehending them than are beings which, like the works of nature, do not depend upon him in any sense for their existence. Such objects, however, even in their existence, only depend upon him in respect of their *form*, not in respect of their *matter*. He has made them out of material which he did not make. But

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 58, § 19.

any possible object of God's knowledge is to be regarded as owing to him not only its form but its whole being—form and matter alike; and not even in a partial regard (for example, as apprehending them) can God be conceived, as it were, to wait upon his object and be determined by it. Hence, in the case of God, his thoughts or conceptions of things must be held as determining them, as archetypal, not as ectypal or determined by them. This may be illustrated by the analogy of the artist, whose designs are afterwards carried out in his works and determine what he makes; but the illustration must necessarily be very inadequate. Not only is the artistic product not, like the works of God, produced out of nothing; but the artist's, or at least the plastic artist's, pre-existent design is usually regarded as something inchoate or imperfect, which remains 'a mere idea', as we say (using the word which Thomas used of the thoughts of God in a less exalted sense than he gives to it), until it is *realized* in the picture or statue or edifice. On the other hand, it is impossible not to regard the divine archetypal design, which is part of the eternal essence of God, as something possessing an altogether higher and fuller kind of reality than the perishable creatures which seem to embody it. With these introductory considerations, we may pass to consider Thomas's working out of his discussion of the contents of the divine Intelligence.

He controverts the view that *singularia*, particulars, are not objects of the divine knowledge. Some (he says) withdraw them from its ken, supposing thereby to make it out more perfect. Seven reasons for this view are recognized. Particulars involve matters which cannot be the object of an immaterial function like the understanding, even in ourselves, whose knowledge of singulars is obtained by other faculties, which are material organs, such as sense and imagination. They are transitory, contingent, in some cases due to free will, infinite in number, comparatively



ignoble, and in some cases even evil. All these characteristics render them unfit objects of the divine knowledge.

Thomas meets all these difficulties. In so doing he has before him the discussion of the subject by the great Jewish theologian, Maimonides, whose reply to Averroes was often his model in meeting those views of the Mohammedan commentator which raised difficulties for any religion which, like Judaism and Christianity (and indeed, I suppose, like Islam too, Averroes's own nominal creed), committed its followers to a trust in God's providential care of individual souls and individual lives. The puzzle involved in this question of God's knowledge of *singularia* is not one merely belonging to the past. If we turn to Mr. Bosanquet's lately published important work on *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*, we are at once brought face to face with it. In his earlier volume on *The Principle of Individuality and Value* the author had discussed Individuality in a way which seemed to leave no true individuality except to the Absolute, and thus to place his philosophy in the class of those to which Averroism itself belongs. In the later volume he comes to grips with the question of what we generally mean by individuality—such individuality as yours or mine—and concludes that what we mean by the 'religious consciousness' is just the consciousness which such finite individuals as you or I have of our oneness with the Absolute. He holds that in his recognition of the value of the individual soul which is the subject of this consciousness he is able to claim essential agreement with St. Thomas's great disciple Dante; but his readers will, I think, feel it open to doubt whether he has really done as much justice as he claims to have done to the demands of the individual soul. The world in which we live, a hostile critic might say, is indeed to Mr. Bosanquet in the striking phrase which he borrows from a letter of Keats 'a vale of soul-making'; but in Mr. Bosanquet's scheme they are

made—*tusionibus pressuris expoliti lapides*, as the mediaeval hymn has it—only, when once made, to be destroyed for ever. To this Mr. Bosanquet would reply that they are made in order to lose themselves ; that only in such loss of self can they find themselves ; and that this is the classical doctrine of the religion of Europe, as expressed in a well-known text of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The reply is not, perhaps, conclusive ; but my only purpose at present is to show that the question at issue between Mr. Bosanquet and such a critic as I have been supposing is in fact the same question which is concerned in this old dispute about God's knowledge of *singularia* between Averroes upon the one side and Maimonides and St. Thomas upon the other. Some of the difficulties which Thomas encounters plainly depend upon the supposition that the divine knowledge is related to its object just as human knowledge is. But this cannot be ; even matter, as the creature of God, has its archetype in the divine understanding ; even what does not actually exist God knows as possible to his own power. He knows particulars which are future and contingent ; his knowledge being the cause, and not, as ours is, the effect of what is known. Even the motions of the will he knows ; for the freedom of our wills, while excluding a determination of our natural power of action to a single course of action, and also the *violentia* or constraint of an external finite cause, does not exclude the *influence* (the word is important) of that supreme Cause, which is the cause of all our activity and even of our existence. Thus *remanet causalitas in causa prima quae Deus est*, and the self-knowledge of God includes all voluntary acts, since he is their ultimate cause. Nor does the impossibility of counting to infinity debar from the knowledge of what is infinite in number an intelligence such as God's is, whose knowledge is not successive. Things ignoble he knows no less than noble ; even the noblest creatures are infinitely

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 39.

below the excellence of the divine nature, and the comparative ignobility of what we count ignoble can present no more difficulty to the divine knowledge than is present with what, in comparison with them, is highest in the scale of being. Even what is evil God knows (since evil is only privation of good) in the act of knowing these imperfectly good things which are evil because of their deficiency in certain respects. Moreover, God's intelligence implies will ; both because of the necessary complacency implied in his self-knowledge, and because only through will is intelligence causal, and God's intelligence is causal of the being and movement of all beside God himself. This argument, it is to be observed, is partly Aristotelian and partly un-Aristotelian. The Aristotelian God has, so we are told in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>1</sup> one simple and constant pleasure involved in his eternal activity of self-knowledge ; but in his causality of the universal movement his will has no part ; nor is he the cause of the being of other things, except so far as it is due itself to the universal movement, of which he is the final cause, and only the efficient cause so far forth as he is the final.<sup>2</sup> Thomas proceeds to develop the conception of the divine will as he had developed that of the divine intelligence. God wills of necessity his own existence and his own goodness ; but whatever he wills that is not himself, he wills not of necessity but freely, as the artificer wills to make the things which he makes. We have seen that God's understanding comprehends things evil, but here the analogy of his understanding and will does not hold. He wills no evil. It is curious that Thomas mentions two opinions which are inconsistent with this position and ascribed sin to God. One is a statement of the Jews in the Talmud that God sometimes sins and is

<sup>1</sup> vii. 14, 1154 b 26.

<sup>2</sup> With the Aristotelian view contrast St. Thomas, *Comm. in Dion. de Div. Nom.* iv. 9 (*de ipso amore*), on the fruitful love of God.

purged from sin ; and the other is the doctrine of the Luciferians that God sinned in casting down Lucifer. I do not know what particular Talmudic story was in Thomas's mind. The irreverence of some anecdotes about God to be found in Jewish books had already shocked Christian writers. Some such are related in Peter the Venerable's treatise against the Jews already mentioned. But probably the Christians were taking the tales in question too literally, and without entering into the spirit of the literature from which they were taken. As to the Luciferians, they were a sect contemporary with Thomas himself, the history of the persecution of whom by the Inquisition may be read in Mr. Lea's History of that institution.<sup>1</sup> They are said to have venerated Lucifer or Satan, to have lamented his expulsion from heaven and to have believed in his restoration thereto, or even (so their enemies asserted) in his final victory over God. They were, in fact, one of the sects owing their origin to the dualistic Manichaeism of which the Middle Ages saw so widespread a recrudescence.

In the second book of the *Summa contra Gentiles* Thomas deals with God's relations to his creatures. The Angelic Doctor does not seem to have shared his master Albert's curiosity about the wonders of nature. Hence, while as a divine and as a metaphysician his fame has to a great extent swallowed up that of the elder Dominican, he has nothing to set beside Albert's *Summa de Creaturis*, which served the later Middle Ages as a treasure-house of information, true and false, regarding natural history. However, had Thomas not markedly differed from Albert in this respect, he would still have in the present work been concerned only with natural knowledge so far as it bears on the divine. And here we find him regarding it not merely as leading us to admire the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, but as a preservative from unworthy thoughts

<sup>1</sup> ii. 357, 358 ; see other references in the index.

of the divine, and also of human, nature. For lack of natural knowledge leads to the worship of natural objects (for example, the sun and moon) and the estimation of them as of higher dignity than the human soul. And beyond question natural science, though it is not always so easily pressed as Thomas would have us think into the service of a spiritual religion, is at any rate the grand foe of superstitious religion. We have already frequently had occasion to observe that the *damnosa hereditas* of the great Greek philosophers to mediaeval theology, the veneration of the heavenly bodies, had its roots in Plato's emphatic rejection of the scientific generalization by which Anaxagoras had recognized in the great luminaries, the sun and moon themselves, things of no higher nature than belonged to the gross matter of this earth.

With an insight which rarely fails Thomas into the affinities of his religious view of the world, he argues against all views which, like Aristotle's own, make God the mover and not the maker of the spheres, or which mediate his creative activity through inferior beings, who, while themselves created, create others in their turn. The maxim *Ex nihilo nihil fit* does not hold of the Universal agent. Thomas attempts to steer a middle course between on the one hand holding that God could not have done otherwise than he did,<sup>1</sup> and on the other referring all (as Duns Scotus did) to the arbitrary will of the Creator. The Creator acts freely, but not without a principle of determination in his reason; the highest freedom is not irrational or unmotivated.

The great question then presents itself of the eternity of the world. This doctrine, which was certainly taught by Aristotle himself, was contrary to the teaching of the

<sup>1</sup> A doctrine which he elsewhere (*de Potentia*, i. 5) connects with the name of Abelard. His words, *et imponitur hic error magistro Petro Abailardo*, suggest that he had not Abelard's words before him. His knowledge was probably derived only from St. Bernard's heads of Abelard's heresies prefixed to the *Tractatus de Erroribus Abaelardi* (*Ep.* 190). The doctrine is the third error there enumerated. See Abael. *Introd. ad Theol.* iii. 5 (*Opp.* ed. Cousin, ii. 123 ff.).



three great religions known to the men of the Middle Ages in the West, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, all of which taught a creation of the world as a fundamental article of their respective creeds. The assertion, notwithstanding this, of the Aristotelian doctrine by the great Arabic commentator Averroes, brought it about that this was one of the two points (the other being the transitory nature of the individual soul) which distinguished Averroism as what, until the end of the Middle Ages, it came to be considered, the philosophy which was *not* reconciled with theological orthodoxy. Before the time of Thomas, and in view of older writers than Averroes, the doctors of Islam, who were called Mutakallemin or professors,<sup>1</sup> had essayed to prove by reason that the world was *not* eternal; but Thomas followed the great Jewish writer Maimonides in not essaying this. He was prepared to admit that reason by itself might naturally reach Aristotle's conclusion; but this conclusion was not necessitated by the ground alleged, only rendered probable. It was by revelation alone that we were enabled to reject it. I shall not here enter into the detail of this controversy concerning the eternity of the world, than which no controversy was more fiercely agitated in the great age of Scholasticism, with the exception of that, of which I shall shortly speak, concerning the Unity of the Intellect and the denial so closely connected therewith of the immortality of the individual soul. For it was just in these two points, of the eternity of the world and the perishableness of the individual soul, that the synthesis of the two grand authorities, the Catholic Faith and the Philosopher, was most difficult to effect. The frank confession that the heterodox views on these two points could appeal to the Philosopher was associated with the name of Averroes; and hence a strange fate overtook the reputation of the great

<sup>1</sup> In the phrase *loquentes in lege Saracenorum*, which one finds in mediaeval Latin writers, *loquentes* translates this Arabic word.

Commentator whom (as I have already observed) Thomas himself always quotes with respect and Dante in his vision saw with the sages and poets of antiquity in that *loco aperto luminoso ed alto*, that place of sadness without torment, where the Old Testament saints had rested until the descent of Christ into hell. For this same great Commentator came to be regarded by a later generation as the worst foe of religion, whom painters delighted to depict—as for example in a fresco at Sta. Maria Novella in Florence—in the character of a defeated enemy whom the triumphant Angelic Doctor had trampled underfoot. The story of this change in the attitude of mediaeval Christendom towards Averroes is told in Renan's book *Averroès et Averroïsme*.

Thomas in no way despised the arguments that could be brought forward in favour of the eternity of the world; but he thought they could be met. It was quite conceivable that a divine decree which, as existing in the eternal mind, was itself eternal, should only take effect in time, since that this temporal character should belong to the effect might be part of what was eternally decreed. As to familiar puzzles that notoriously beset the notion of a fresh beginning in time and seem thus to postulate an eternal succession of events *a parte ante*, Thomas does not reply with Kant that time is a form of perception which does not attach to things as they are in themselves. For him, as for Augustine and Augustine's ultimate master Plato, time is rather, if I may so put it (it is not their language), the form of the perceptible; it attaches to finite things, to the creation, but not to the Creator. It is only by a trick of the imagination that an eternal Now comes to be treated as a part of time. There was, we may say, no time before creation, as there is no space or place above the outermost heaven. But we must guard ourselves against translating such negations into the assertion of a real *before* or a real *above*. Nor, lastly, is creation to be brought under the general

conception of change or movement, and so made to involve an antecedent change or movement, as any particular change or movement does. There is, as I have just pointed out, an obvious difference between this argumentation and Kant's on the same subject, but also an obvious resemblance. The arguments for the thesis that the world is eternal are disabled by Thomas no less than by Kant as inapplicable to Ultimate Reality; but not on the ground that they relate only to our way of cognizing reality. For Thomas they hold only of the finite, the derivative, the created; but they hold of this as it is, and not only as we perceive it.

If, however, Thomas thus dismisses the reasons given for affirming the eternity of the world as insufficient, he is not convinced by the arguments of those who would *prove* that it is not eternal. In taking this position, as in his enumeration of the arguments on both sides, he is again following closely in the steps of the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides in his *Dux Dubitantium*. This work was originally written in Arabic, for Maimonides lived and wrote in Mohammedan countries, and indeed was long resident at the Court of Cairo as physician to the illustrious Saladin. A Latin translation of it was already extant in Thomas's day.<sup>1</sup> With Maimonides Thomas holds that the eternity of the world cannot be disproved by reason, though it cannot be proved by it. It is only by revelation—by prophecy, as Maimonides calls it; by the Catholic Faith, as Thomas puts it; any way, by revelation—that both writers consider the question decided in favour of a creation. Hence Aristotle could not be expected decisively to reject the opinion of the eternity of the world; although Maimonides at any rate is at pains to contend that he put it forward only as the more probable opinion and not as a demonstrated truth.

Having accepted, on the strength of revelation, the alternative of creation in preference to the Aristotelian and Averroist

<sup>1</sup> There is an English one by Dr. Friedländer.

doctrine of the eternity of the world, Thomas insists that the diversity of things is to be ascribed to the creative will and not to be explained either by the conflict of a hostile principle with God or by the mediation of some inferior agency. This leads him expressly to reject a number of doctrines inconsistent with this view, that had been put forward by pagan Greeks, by Mohammedans, and by heretical teachers, ancient or modern, within Christendom. But no doubt one of the two types of view which he was most concerned to reject was the Manichaean dualism which was in his time a very active leaven in European thought, permeating sects like the Cathari and their congeners, and sometimes undeniably traceable in the schools of Paris. The other was the Averroist doctrine of the Unity of the Intellect, which removed the distinct individuality of men not only from the design but even from the knowledge of God ; and by thus regarding it as something which belonged only to an inferior or transitory order of existence involved the denial of individual immortality.

Against this doctrine Thomas had directed a special treatise, and it is constantly present to his thoughts. Creation, Providence, Immortality—what a later age was to regard as the fundamental articles of Natural Religion—were all excluded by it ; just as on the other hand the Manichaean dualism was inconsistent (as mere polytheism, in which a single God might be acknowledged above the rest, was not inconsistent) with the eternal and religious significance of that monotheism which was fundamental not in Christianity only but in its rival faiths, Judaism and Mohammedanism, as well. As I previously observed, for nothing is Thomas more remarkable than for his clear perception of the relative congruity or incongruity of philosophical doctrines with the Christian creed. Apologist as he is, his apologetic is thus in the highest degree intelligent and illuminating ; it is concerned not merely to

defend a heterogeneous assemblage of dogmas but to penetrate to principles which may exhibit these dogmas as forming an organic unity.

The diversity of things in the universe is thus an expression of the divine similitude, which could not be expressed in any one created thing ; though it is, so Thomas of course holds, fully expressed in the uncreated Word. Without the existence of *substantiae intellectuales*—minds or intelligences—the universe would not be perfect. Such minds, Thomas holds, have a natural desire for individual immortality quite distinct from the natural desire, which they share with irrational beings, for perpetuity *secundum speciem*. This latter desire is instinctive with them as with the lower animals ; but the desire for perpetuity which proceeds from that conception of perpetual existence which they have and the lower animals have not, is distinctly a desire for perpetuity of their individual existence ; and this, like the instinctive desire for the perpetuity of the kind, and like all natural desires, cannot be supposed to have no corresponding satisfaction. This teleological principle is not further defended : it was of course fundamental in the Aristotelian philosophy that 'Nature does nothing in vain'.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of the relation of the soul to the body gives Thomas much trouble, as it has other thinkers before and since. On the surface it seems as if his problem was merely one of reconciling two views which are really irreconcilable, but both of which were for him authoritative—the Aristotelian doctrine that the soul is the form of the body, and the traditional Christian doctrine that it is an independent substance capable of existing by itself after the death of the body ; and no doubt it is true that the question took this shape for him. Still his treatment of the Aristotelian doctrine

<sup>1</sup> The maxim constantly occurs in Aristotle, e.g. *de Caelo*, i. 4. 271 a 33 ; ii. 11. 291 b 13 ; *de Part. Anim.* ii. 13. 658 a 8, &c.



of the eternity of the world shows that he was not incapable of rejecting an Aristotelian view which appeared to him in flat contradiction with the doctrine of the Church. Why did he not treat the Aristotelian psychology as he had the Aristotelian cosmology?

The explanation is, I think, to be sought where we are generally to seek for the explanation of whatever seems to require it in the thought of Thomas: in the insight which we have several times noted as characteristic of his mind into the congruity or incongruity of philosophical theories with the Christian religion. The Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world was indeed inconsistent with the authoritative Christian tradition, but was in itself neither congruous nor incongruous with it. An eternal creation of the world by God would have presented no difficulty to Thomas; and, though this was not Aristotle's doctrine, it was one into which it could easily have been transformed. On the other hand, what was essential to Christianity, the complete dependence of the world upon God, though compatible with an eternal production of the world by the divine being, was at least as well secured by the doctrine of a creation, if not in time in the sense that there was a time before it, at least in time in so far as it occurred before all other times and does not occur in them. Indeed, when we consider Thomas's insistence on the continual activity of God in conservation—an insistence in which he was, as in several other points, a follower of Maimonides—the distinction tends to become one of language rather than of meaning. In the case, therefore, of the eternity of the world, Thomas could entirely reject on grounds of faith, though not of reason, the Aristotelian position. But the case of the relation of the soul to the body was different.

On this subject the distinguishing note of Christianity lay in its emphasis on the concrete individuality of each human being; and the relevant doctrine characteristic of

the religion was that of the resurrection of the body. Of all the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church none is less congenial to the *Weltanschauung* of modern science<sup>1</sup> than this. It is intimately bound up with imagery belonging to that great cosmological and eschatological scheme which it is now the fashion to regard as of Babylonian origin, and in which some scholars of our own day are disposed to recognize the only real 'system of nature' which has ever been offered as an alternative to that which we associate with the names of Copernicus and Newton. Professing to relate to our material frames, which are objects of present sensible observation and of experimental study, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body seems altogether at odds with what observation and experiment teach us concerning them. Hence it cannot be denied that it is apt to be retained by educated Christians in modern times, if at all, only in a form widely variant from that which the phraseology literally suggests, and often much in the background, as it were, of their religious consciousness. At the same time it has another aspect. It implies a conviction, however strangely expressed, of the intimate connexion of soul and body, of the indispensable-ness of the body to the fullness of human nature, which is quite at variance with Orphic or Platonic notions of the body as the temporary tomb of the soul, and much more in harmony than they with the convictions of modern science.

Dealing as I am with the Natural Theology of Thomas, who, as we have seen, carefully delimits the spheres of Natural and Revealed Theology, I am not concerned with his treatment of the questions which, from St. Paul's time<sup>2</sup> downwards, have been raised as to the possibility of picturing a bodily resurrection—'with what body do they come?' I am

<sup>1</sup> It was, on somewhat different grounds, highly uncongenial also to the Platonism of the early Christian centuries. See Bigg's *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, pp. 271 ff, 313 f.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 35.

only concerned with the view of the relation of soul to body which seemed to him necessitated by his religion, of which some kind of resurrection of the body was a chief article.

We have here a position analogous to that on which I have already commented in regard to the general philosophies of Plato and Aristotle and their respective relation to Christian theology. We saw that though Plato's was a more religious system than Aristotle's and his God not, like Aristotle's, remote from any communion of man with him, yet this very circumstance made Platonism less well able than Aristotelianism to supply a philosophical form of expression for a theology concerned to insist on what is now often called (though not, in my opinion, very happily called) the transcendence of God. So in this matter of the relation of the soul and body one might have thought the Platonic spiritualism better sorted with a Christian doctrine of immortality than the Aristotelian doctrine, which has often seemed to students of it, as it did to Bacon,<sup>1</sup> a doctrine but little, if at all, removed from materialism, and which certainly in Aristotle's own mind carried with it the denial of immortality to all that part of our soul which is personally individual. Yet as a matter of fact the Platonic spiritualism, which had deeply affected Christian thought, essentially tended towards a treatment of the body as a mere temporary habitation, a purgatory or a tomb of the soul, whereas the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul as the form of the body, despite its materialistic possibilities, harmonized with the distinctive characteristic of the Christian doctrine of immortality (a characteristic closely dependent on the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation), by which the body was associated with the soul in its glory as well as in its humiliation, and shared in its redemption from the power of evil. I do not propose to enter here upon a full consideration of the psychology of St. Thomas.

<sup>1</sup> This is probably implied in the criticism in *Nov. Org.* i. 63.

We are only now concerned with it in its bearing on Natural Theology. But even so far we shall not be able to understand it without some attention to the principal theories which were in his mind as he developed it. It is, therefore, necessary to advert to the *de Anima* of Aristotle and his doctrines of the unity of the soul, of the *voûs* or *intellectus*, and of the *voûs ὁ ποιῶν*, the *Intellectus Agens* of his scholastic followers.

Aristotle had deprecated<sup>1</sup> the Platonic doctrine of parts of the soul. He did not allow that the soul could properly be said to have parts at all, such as Plato had enumerated, since such faculties as Plato had called parts were not capable of actual separation from one another. Nor did he admit that the Platonic list was an adequate enumeration of the principal faculties of the soul. At the same time he himself sometimes spoke of a 'vegetative soul' and a 'sensitive soul'. The language of the Philosopher seemed to Thomas apt to express a doctrine of the human soul which would admit of its persistence after death without loss of real continuity with the earthly and bodily life, on the character whereof depended its eternal destiny. For Aristotle's psychology secured the unity in all its various activities of the soul which animates a single body; it suggested that, while the soul of a plant was different from that of an animal (as merely vegetative), and that of an animal from that of a man (as sensitive and vegetative, but not rational), yet the rational soul of man did not coexist in man with a sensitive *and* vegetative soul; rather it would discharge in him the functions which the merely vegetative, or the vegetative and sensitive but not intelligent soul discharged elsewhere in addition to the function of thought which was peculiar to itself. In Thomas's time the so-called creationist doctrine, that a new soul is created by God 'out of nothing' for every human being that is born, was the orthodox one

<sup>1</sup> *de Anima*, iii. 9.

as against the traducianist theory that the soul of each man is derived from his parents as his body from their bodies.

But even the creationist doctrine found a *point d'appui* in Aristotle's psychology, for Aristotle had held that the *voûs* came *θύραθεν* into each human being<sup>1</sup>, just as an 'immortal soul' was supposed on the creationist hypothesis to be newly created by God for each human being pre-created in the course of nature. The *voûs* of Aristotle was not exactly the immortal soul of Christian tradition; and the stage of physical development at which the *voûs* was held by Aristotle to unite itself with the bodily organism was not that at which Thomas held that the soul was united to it. But these were minor differences which it was not difficult to adjust. The essential point, the unity of the soul in all its functions, was secured by adhesion to the Aristotelian psychology. We come to a difficult question when we touch upon the so-called Active Intellect and its correlative, the Possible Intellect, as it is called by Thomas. The brief account given of these by Aristotle<sup>2</sup> has always been a subject of great difficulty to his commentators. Students of Aristotle are familiar with the antithesis of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*, Power and Act, Potentiality and Actuality, which runs through his whole view of things. It is a cardinal principle of his philosophy that actuality is always ultimately prior to potentiality. The actual statue no doubt is posterior, not prior, to the marble out of which it is made, and which is potentially, not actually, that statue into which it is eventually moulded; the acorn which is potentially an oak is prior to the actual oak which springs from it; the child to the man, and so on. But even here the block of marble is itself a potential statue only in virtue of the design of the statue already formed in the mind of the artist, who thereupon chooses the block in which to realize it; and in the sphere of organic nature the acorn has grown

<sup>1</sup> *de Gen. An.* ii. 3, 736 b 28.

<sup>2</sup> *de Anima*, iii. 5.



upon a parent oak, the egg was laid by a hen, the child begotten by a man. If in the world of generation and decay, which is situate, according to the Aristotelian cosmology, below the sphere of the moon, there is a perpetual alternation of potentiality and actuality; yet this, like all motion, may ultimately be referred to the eternal movement of the heavens, and this itself to God who, himself unmoved, moves the outer heaven as the beloved the lover, and whose own existence is one of eternal and complete activity, in which is no potentiality at all; an eternal activity of self-knowledge, *νόησις νοήσεως*.<sup>1</sup>

Such knowledge is, thinks Aristotle, the only activity which we can attribute to the Deity, since it alone can be conceived to be completely self-sufficing; and in the life of knowledge human beings exercise an activity the same in principle as that which is eternal in God. In them however it is intermittent and transient: and hence *νοῦς*, *Intellectus*, Reason,<sup>2</sup> as it exists in man, exists in him only as a capacity for knowledge which is not always realized. The human mind sometimes thinks or knows, sometimes again does not. But this on Aristotle's principles will involve the recognition of some actual being by which this capacity can be roused to actuality; and as what thus rouses to actuality cannot be something of lesser dignity than that which is roused, it can be nothing but itself *νοῦς*, *νοῦς* active or actual, which thinks not now and again but always. This is, I think, a fairly correct statement of the line of thought by which Aristotle arrived at his doctrine of the Active Intelligence. But having arrived at it, he leaves it there, and so has bequeathed to his commentators a fruitful occasion of

<sup>1</sup> *Met.* Δ 9. 1074 b 34.

<sup>2</sup> We now tend to call our highest cognitive activity by this name, but in the Middle Ages it was called by the name of *Intellectus*, Understanding, a title relegated since Kant to a lower level of cognition.

speculation and controversy. What is this Active or Creative Intellect? Aristotle does not even, we may note, expressly call it by this name; it is described only as 'the Intellect which makes', ὁ ποιῶν, while that intellect which it arouses πᾶσχει; but as early as Alexander of Aphrodisias, the second-century commentator on Aristotle, we find it designated ὁ ποιητικὸς νοῦς. How is it related to the human soul? how to the supreme Intelligence, the unmoved first Mover or God? how to the Intelligences which Aristotle supposed to move the various spheres required to explain the planetary motions, each of which Intelligences stood to its own sphere as God to the outer heaven, in whose all-inclusive movement all the lower spheres were carried round? Here were a whole crop of questions, to none of which could a plain answer be found in the writings of the Master himself. Now we have already seen that for Thomas the Commentator *par excellence* was Averroes of Cordova, Ibn Rosch as he is properly called. He was acquainted also with the views of the earlier Arabian commentator Avicenna and with those of the ancient Greek commentator to whom I have already referred, Alexander of Aphrodisias. Now Averroes held that not only the Active Intellect but the Potential Intellect also was one in all men.<sup>1</sup> This would mean that when we come to knowledge, which is—it is agreed by all these disciples of Aristotle, Thomas as well as the rest—the highest of human functions, the difference between one man and another is transcended. It would follow from this that the teaching of Aristotle as to the immortality of the νοῦς cannot be prayed in aid of a doctrine of individual immortality. And not only is the individual thus not the subject or possessor of true knowledge; he is not the object of it either; Providence, a special providence by

<sup>1</sup> He called it, as we shall see, the 'Material Intellect', and distinguished it from the Passible or Passive Intellect which was a susceptibility in each human being to its influence.

which 'the hairs of your head are all numbered',<sup>1</sup> has vanished as well as an immortality for the individual. As has been shown by Dr. Charles in his studies of Jewish and Christian eschatology,<sup>2</sup> the belief in individual immortality, which became so closely associated with the religious consciousness of Jews and Christians, arose historically out of the belief in a God with whom the individual was in spiritual communion; and the higher religion of Israel had even cut itself adrift from the older belief, the animistic belief, if we like so to call it, in a shadowy existence in Sheol, before it developed a new doctrine of the future life springing from a new conviction of the individual's intimate relation to the Eternal. Such a merely 'animistic' belief, on the other hand, in a shadowy existence in the underworld, is the only belief in individual immortality of which Aristotle takes any notice;<sup>3</sup> and his own doctrine of the immortality of the *voûs* was no doctrine of individual immortality at all. The Commentator was a faithful follower of his master here. But it was just here that neither Maimonides the Jew nor Thomas the Christian could follow him without disloyalty to their religious convictions.

Averroes had, however, gone further than fidelity to Aristotle demanded. Not only the Active or Actual, but the Potential Intellect was for him one in all men. This left the individual, as I have already observed, practically not the subject of knowledge, not really an intellectual being at all. Here the problem of the Active Intellect becomes closely involved with another puzzle bequeathed by Aristotle to his scholastic followers, that of the Principle of Individuation. What was it that made one individual to differ from another of the same species? On the whole

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 30.

<sup>2</sup> See *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (the Jowett Lectures, 1898-9).

<sup>3</sup> e.g. in the discussion in *Eth. Nic.* i. 11 of Solon's saying that one should call no man happy while he lives.

there was good Aristotelian authority for saying, as Thomas Aquinas understood Aristotle to teach, that it was (at least in such beings as men) their *matter*. But there is a possible misunderstanding to be avoided here. God is certainly for Aristotle individual, and so are the movers of the stars; yet God and these Intelligences are immaterial. The stars themselves differ from one another, but they are not individuals of the same species; each planet is a species by itself. The very essence of Aristotle's controversy with Plato is that he will not allow, as he understands Plato to allow, a substantial existence to the Universal; the *πρώτη οὐσία* is always individual. The upshot seems to be that for Aristotle all real beings are individual; but not necessarily individuals of the same species with others. Individuals of the same species with others only exist in this sublunary world of change and decay: where only through an unending succession of transitory individuals can the living being fulfil the law of his nature by emulating so far as he can the eternal nature of God. Hence for Aristotle matter is the principle of individuation in a species; but not the principle of that individuality which belongs to real beings as such. Thomas Aquinas did not misunderstand Aristotle on this point.

Yet for Aristotle human beings belonged to the sublunary world; individual men are members of a species which is individuated by matter. They do not rank with the eternal individuals, with the stars and their unmoved movers. Thomas Aquinas believed, however, that he could reconcile the Aristotelian doctrine with the immortality of the human individual by availing himself of the doctrine of the resurrection. The soul is individual as the form of an individual body: yet it does not lose its individuality through what Thomas Aquinas supposed to be its temporary dissociation from the body whose form it is. It must not be supposed, by the way, that Thomas Aquinas's

view here was universally held in the Middle Ages. His great rival Duns Scotus, on the contrary, finding in matter no adequate principle of individuation, introduced the famous *haecceitas*, the *thisness* of each individual, whereby it was this thing and no other. Thomas Aquinas, however, held that matter was the principle of individuation and that this and no other was the true doctrine of the Philosopher. But Thomas had before him the doctrine, which Alexander of Aphrodisias and Avicenna had found in the Philosopher, that there was but one Active Intellect for all men, and also the doctrine, yet more destructive of the importance of the individual personality, which Averroes had found in him: that not the Active or Actual Intellect only but also that which Averroes (following Alexander of Aphrodisias) called the Material Intellect—Thomas prefers to call it the Possible Intellect—was one in all men. Averroes, as I have already remarked, distinguished the Passible Intellect, which is a part of the individual soul, from each of these. This Passible Intellect is a sensible faculty, the possession of which makes men capable of partaking in the Possible Intellect; the Possible Intellect is, however, one in all men, and is *separatus*; as also is the Active Intellect. But neither the doctrine of Alexander and Avicenna nor that of Averroes could Thomas accept. For him not only the Possible or Potential Intellect as against Averroes, but also the Active as against Alexander and Avicenna, was *aliquid animae*, a part of the soul of each human being, so that there are as many active intellects and as many possible intellects too as there are individuals of our species. No doubt the content—as we sometimes put it, using a conveniently (or, perhaps it would be truer to say, a misleadingly) ambiguous term—the content of the intellects of all men when they *know* is so far the same. You may, indeed, know what I do not, but where you and I both *know* anything, then, if we really *know* it, there must be identity in the content of our



knowledge. But this is, Thomas insists, really an identity of object only, not of subject. The subjects are in very truth many; as many as there are individuals that know.

The doctrine of Alexander and Avicenna of the unity of the Active, though not of the Possible (or Potential) Intellect in all men, seemed to Thomas to make the human being in his highest and most essentially human function wholly dependent on another being; and this was inconsistent with the recognition of a free control exercised by the individual human being over those of his own actions which are most significant and most characteristic. For the Active Intellect, if not *aliquid animae*, must be a *substantia separata*, a super-human, but not the divine Intelligence. Alexander of Aphrodisias had identified it, it is true, with the divine Intelligence. But neither Thomas nor his master Albert seem to have known this fact. Thomas, indeed, in arguing against Averroes, in one place contends that the same reasoning as was produced to show that all men shared in one Intellect, would prove the same of all beings, and so make the Active Intellect identical with God; but he plainly does not regard this as a view actually held by any author known to him. He knew, however, that Avicenna identified the Active Intellect with the *ultima intelligentia*, that is the lowest in the chain of sphere-moving Intelligences. But if the doctrine of the unity of the Active Intellect robs the finite individual of his freedom, that of the unity of the Possible Intellect leaves him no individuality at all in respect of that activity which Thomas—in this a thorough Aristotelian—always regards as the highest of his activities, the life to live which is the true and ultimate purpose of his being. But for Thomas religious experience is essentially an individual experience, in which the individual finds the abiding value of his individuality. Hence the Averroist view, with the closely connected rejection of a special Provi-

dence, is irreconcilable with the essence of Thomas's theology. We shall have no quarrel with him here on the ground of procedure. Our view of Natural Theology, not as a science consisting of truths reached altogether independently of a historical revelation, but rather as the result of philosophical reflection on a religious experience mediated in every case through a historical religion, makes us ready to approve the procedure of Thomas in deciding to follow Maimonides and to part company with Averroes in respect of those tenets of Averroism which conflicted with a recognition of a genuine religious significance in individuality. A philosopher is quite within his rights in rejecting theories which he sees to be incompatible with a genuine experience of his own; and it is no more discreditable in a philosopher like Berkeley, for example, to reject, on the strength of his own religious experience, a metaphysical formula which leaves no room for such an experience, than in a philosopher who is a student of natural science to reject with Bacon a formula inadequate to the subtlety of nature <sup>1</sup> as he knows it; no more discreditable than for more recent thinkers to object to a 'static absolutism' as untenable by men who have come to envisage the organic world as the result of evolution, and to ask themselves whether even the inorganic world may not also be so envisaged.

We shall thus not be disposed to quarrel with Thomas for his decisive rejection of Averroism as fundamentally inconsistent with the religious experience of a Christian who is sure that, in the Gospel phrase I have already quoted, 'the very hairs of his head are all numbered' by a heavenly Father, who is his portion for ever,<sup>2</sup> from whose love neither angels nor principalities, neither life nor death, nor any other created thing can separate him.<sup>3</sup> It is rather the sharp line drawn by Thomas (though not as we saw by Anselm, nor by Abelard), between the sphere of Revelation

<sup>1</sup> See *Nov. Org.* i. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 38.

and that of Natural Religion, that will seem to be the most questionable part of his contribution to our subject.

That the Possible Intellect which, unlike the Active Intellect, 'sometimes knows and sometimes does not know',<sup>1</sup> was in Aristotle's own thought *aliquid animae* and so not one in all men, Thomas was, no doubt, right in holding. The ascription to Aristotle of a like view in respect of the Active Intellect presented more difficulty. In the only passage in which he had described it he had used language of it which could scarcely be used of your soul or mine or any mere part of your soul or mine; for he said that it knew always and was ἀμυγές and ἀπαθές. Thomas's interpretation is based upon the Aristotelian doctrine that a faculty of apprehension in its activity is one with its object. This doctrine is not to be understood as though it implied what is generally called in modern times Idealism. What Aristotle is concerned to insist upon is not that, since an object implies a subject as its correlative, therefore that which is object cannot except by abstraction be severed from an apprehending subject; it is rather that apprehension when perfect is completely informed by its object. This is especially true of the highest kind of apprehension, the intellectual. In genuine knowledge the mind has nothing before it but what is independently real, nothing merely subjective: nothing remains which belongs only to the mind itself and not to its object: the mind realizes its essential function, which is knowing, in filling itself, so to say, with its object. Apart from an object the intellect is a mere potentiality of knowledge; but in real knowledge the object is wholly in the mind, and on the other hand there is nothing in the mind but what really belongs to the object. In other words, Aristotle insists not on an essential relativity of things to thought, but on the thoroughly objective character of genuine

<sup>1</sup> See *de Anima*, iii. 5. 430 a 22. Averroes, it may be observed, interpreted the statement of Aristotle that οὐχ ὅτε μὲν νοεῖ ὅτε δὲ οὐ νοεῖ of the 'material' (Thomas's 'possible' intellect).

thought or knowledge. Hence, Thomas sees in the attribution by Aristotle to the Active Intellect of characters which seem not to belong to your thought or mine, only the affirmation that in *actual* knowledge, as distinct from a mere faculty of knowledge, all talk of knowing *now* and not *then*, all 'psychology' in fact, in the sense in which psychology is contrasted with logic, is irrelevant to the knowledge. As knowledge it is just the reality manifested; it differs not at all from an eternal knowledge, such as we may ascribe to God, in what belongs to its actual nature as knowledge, but only in what belongs to its possibility. Whether Aristotle meant any more than this, I am not sure: that he did mean this, I am convinced. Thomas's explanation is thus, I am persuaded, far nearer to Aristotle's mind than any mythological interpretation, such as is found in Avicenna, of the Active Intelligence as an Intelligence distinct from the human, identical with the Intelligence that moves the moon or intermediate in the hierarchy of spirits between that Intelligence and the souls which participate in it.

The latter part of book II of Thomas's *Summa contra Gentiles* is concerned with the comparison and contrast of the human soul with 'separate substances' as he calls them, such as he takes the angels and star-moving Intelligences to be. Two points it is important for our purpose to note in this discussion. He argues against the belief that the heaven itself or the heavenly bodies are animals with souls and bodies.<sup>1</sup> He does not doubt that Aristotle held the heaven at least to be such, and he notes that Augustine<sup>2</sup> left the point doubtful whether the sun, moon, and stars were to be reckoned among the angels. But though he does not think the assertion that the heavenly bodies are bodies animated by souls is inconsistent with orthodoxy, he decidedly rejects

<sup>1</sup> Cp. on the history of this belief in the Christian Church Huet's *Origeniana*, II. ii. 8. This treatise is printed at the end of Origen's works in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*. Maimonides held the stars to be animate beings. See *Guide*, tr. Friedländer, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Enchiridion*, c. 58.

it.<sup>1</sup> The star-moving Intelligences are incorporeal spirits; the stars and spheres themselves are merely corporeal; nor is the action of the Intelligences on the spheres they move to be conceived after the analogy of the voluntary movements of our bodies by our souls. Again, the star-moving Intelligences are not the only separate substances that exist. They are the only separate substances whose existence could be inferred by Aristotle from the phenomena of the heavens; but we have scriptural warrant for supposing multitudes of others to exist. It is noticeable that Thomas's great disciple Dante, by correlating (which Thomas had not done) the nine orders of Angels recognized in the pseudo-Areopagite's celestial Hierarchy with the nine Aristotelian spheres, contrived to unite the recognition of the 'ten thousand times ten thousand' angels of Scripture<sup>2</sup> with that of the completeness of the Aristotelian cosmology. The interest to us of these speculations, remote as they seem from our modern knowledge of the stellar universe, lies in the fact that Thomas Aquinas is so thoroughly alive to the danger involved to the religious principles of Christianity in the acknowledgement of the divinity of the heavenly bodies. The separation of their heavenly movers from those bodies themselves, and the insistence on the merely material nature of these latter, is not merely justified by the text of Aristotle, but is the only possible treatment of the subject, if the Aristotelian framework is to be preserved, which would harmonize with the principles of a Natural Theology based on a religious experience of the Christian type.

The other point to which I would call attention is his view of the relation of the human soul to its body. The soul is not to be conceived of as a pre-existent spiritual being—whether eternal or (as in Origen's theory) created at the

<sup>1</sup> Cp. on this subject Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Majus*, xxiv. cc. 42, 45. A curious discussion of the question at a much later date will be found in the German Jesuit Adam Tanner's *Dissertatio de Caelis*, Ingolstadt, 1621, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. v. 11.



beginning of all things. Here Thomas shows a keen sense of the antagonism between what may, I suppose, be conveniently called the Orphic view of the soul, as a spirit fallen into a house of clay, and the recognition, which is so near his heart, of a permanent significance in the individuality of you or of me, as a man possessed of a special experience bound up with a particular organization and distinct from that of any other individual whatever. Thomas's acceptance of creationism and not of traducianism might seem at first sight to tell in an opposite direction. No doubt his doctrine here is determined rather by the orthodox tradition than by any other consideration. So far, indeed, as the creationist doctrine may be thought to diminish the close intimacy of the individual soul with its body, it might seem to be incongruous with Thomas's main view. On the other hand each soul was held by him to be created for a particular body, of which it becomes in Aristotelian language 'the form'; and so far as the creationist doctrine represents the individual soul as less a mere natural product of the individual's progenitors than it would seem to be according to traducianism, so far the doctrine seems to reinforce (whether or no at the expense of fact) the insistence on the unique individuality of you or of me, which, as we have seen already, is characteristic of the Angelic Doctor. I may, perhaps, call attention in passing to the illustration afforded by Dr. McDougall's recent book on *Body and Mind* of a tendency in traducianism to substitute the race for the individual as the unit of soul. At the beginning of the work in question, Dr. McDougall certainly proposes to defend the doctrine of a soul in the popular sense, in which my soul is distinct from the soul of any other person; but at the end the soul whose existence we have proved—or made highly probable—seems to be a racial soul rather than what we should generally mean by an individual soul at all. Different as the standpoint of Dr. McDougall is from that of Mr. Bosanquet,

my individuality or yours seems in danger of being degraded by both to the rank of what the latter writer frankly calls an *apparent* individuality.<sup>1</sup>

We pass now to the third book of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the subject of which is announced as being 'the perfection of the divine nature as the final cause and orderer of all things'. The general principle of teleology is, as is natural in an Aristotelian, taken as a foundation. But the teleology is characteristically different from the Aristotelian. The heavenly bodies themselves are means to man as an end. For their motions are the cause of 'generation', of those processes of evolution and dissolution, as we should say, whose theatre is this sublunary world; and of these processes their highest product, which is the human mind, is the final cause, and so indirectly also of the heavenly bodies, from which they themselves result, not by accident, but in accordance with a teleological principle. The end of man is itself as by Aristotle placed in *felicitas*, and the *felicitas* of man is placed, again with Aristotle, in the life of knowledge, but more specifically than in the *Nicomachean* (though not than in the *Eudemean*) *Ethics* in the knowledge of God. In the *Eudemean Ethics* the highest life is θεωρία τοῦ θεοῦ and even θεὸν θεραπεύειν καὶ θεωρεῖν<sup>2</sup>—a phrase which at once strikes a different note from any congenial to Aristotle himself, but which also shows how easy was the transition from Aristotle's theology to one more religious, and so more akin to that of such an Aristotelian as Thomas Aquinas himself. There is, Thomas observes, a confused knowledge of God which nearly all men possess; whether because the existence of God is self-evident, as some have thought, though Thomas himself is (as we have seen) not of their mind; or because it can be readily inferred from the order of the world, which is the way in which Thomas

<sup>1</sup> *Value and Destiny of the Individual*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Eth. Eud.* vii. 15, 1249 b 20.

himself accounts for the almost universal acknowledgement of a Deity. This almost universal, but vague and confused, knowledge of God does not, however, fulfil the conditions of such a state of consciousness as may constitute the supreme happiness which is the goal of all human desire and effort. This is shown by reference to the great variety of opinions as to the quarter in which the supreme Governor, whose existence is acknowledged, is to be looked for. The heavenly bodies, the elements, and other men have all been worshipped as God by some group or other of believers in a divine power. Nor is a philosophical knowledge of God by means of a process of rational proof that in which human felicity consists. Such knowledge is full of uncertainty, as the variety of extant systems of philosophical theology attests; nor does it avail to appease the thirst for knowledge. Yet this is what Aristotle, to whom no higher kind of knowledge of God was known, accounts to constitute human felicity in this life beyond which he does not look. Nor again is it knowledge by way of faith. This, too, does not satisfy our desires; rather it inflames them and kindles a longing to see that which we have, without seeing, believed. None, then, of these sorts of knowledge of God, which are available in this present life, can be held to yield the supreme satisfaction entitling them to be called *felicitas humana*. There are other kinds of knowledge of God which are not available in this life, though some authorities have supposed them to be so. Such is the knowledge of God possessed by *substantiae separatae*, unembodied Intelligences, who know God in knowing their own essences. This knowledge has been supposed to be available to us, because we have been supposed by some to be capable of a direct knowledge of the essence of such unembodied Intelligences. Indeed, the *Intellectus Agens* itself, which is the active factor in our own knowledge, is by some regarded as such an unembodied Intelligence with which our souls are directly in contact;

and Averroes took the same view even of the other factor in our knowing, the *Intellectus Possibilis*. Either of these was, however, as we have seen, regarded by Thomas Aquinas as *aliquid animæ*, that is to say, as a particular function of the soul in each of us. And he does not allow that there is a direct knowledge possible to us in this life of any unembodied Intelligences. Even of the nature of our own souls we have no direct intuition. In these contentions we recognize a temper in Thomas almost as much on its guard against *Schwärmerei* and averse to admitting the possibility of cognitions unconditioned by sensible intuition as that of Kant himself. The metaphysics of Avempace and Averroes were, it is true, more obviously akin to the 'dreams of a ghost-seer' like Swedenborg than the metaphysics of Wolff, in which Kant detected a like relationship. On the other hand Thomas has not committed himself to M. Bergson's paradox that matter is just what is most intelligible to us. He expressly allows that *materialitas* is precisely that which *repugnat intelligibilitati*. He will not, however, be led on to grant that, because unembodied Intelligences are in themselves, just because they are unembodied, more apt objects of intelligence, therefore our human intelligence will find them so. He contents himself with a quotation of Aristotle's saying<sup>1</sup> that our intellect is related to what is in itself most intelligible as the bat's eye to the light of the sun. In this life, then, for Thomas any higher knowledge of God than that of which the medium is faith is not to be had : neither a knowledge mediated through commerce with unembodied Intelligences nor *a fortiori* a direct vision of the divine essence itself. The inference is that the supreme end of human life, the genuine *felicitas humana*, is not attainable under the conditions of an earthly existence ; nor even in a higher mode of being without a special grace or revelation of God ; for even the unembodied Intelligences

<sup>1</sup> *Met. a.* 993 b 9.

do not possess in their natural knowledge of God that direct vision which alone can appease all the longings of the intellectual nature. We see how Thomas is working up to the recognition of Revelation as postulated by the unsatisfactory incompleteness of the highest conceivable knowledge of God.

From the notion of God as the Supreme End he passes to that of God as the Supreme Ruler. Here he attempts to develop a conception of divine Providence which shall avoid on the one side a fatalism leaving no room for contingency or free choice, and on the other a doctrine which, while admitting a merely general providence, should, in disregard of the fact that universals only exist in their particulars, withdraw *singularia* from its purview. He does not deny that the designs of Providence are carried on by mediating causes, which nevertheless depend throughout for their efficiency on the divine power which is at work in them; that the world of material nature is ordered by created Intelligences, and created Intelligences of a lower rank by created Intelligences of a higher; and that God orders, through the movements of the heavenly bodies, the movements of bodies in the sublunary world. But only of bodies. No intellectual operation is directly determined by the movements of the heavenly bodies, and we can only suppose any to be so determined if, with some of the ancient philosophers, we do not distinguish the understanding from the senses; for the senses are, he says, no doubt affected by the celestial motions, and owing to the dependence of the understanding for its proper working in man upon the senses and upon the bodily condition, the heavenly bodies, as affecting the bodily state, indirectly affect the operations of the understanding, though only indirectly. And what is true of the understanding is true also, he tells us, of the will. Into Thomas's attempted solution of the difficulties raised by the necessity of reconciling the freedom of the human will with



the ultimate divine causality—and in the case of the will he holds this to be not only ultimate but immediate—I do not propose to go. It is not, indeed, easy to master. But I desire to emphasize his decisive repudiation of a natural determination of our wills by the motions of the heavenly bodies.

Thomas admits the possibility of miracles, or acts of God in which the mediation of natural causes is dispensed with. For him such are *praeter naturae ordinem rebus inditum* but not *contra naturam*.<sup>1</sup> He does not allow that any being but God can be properly said to work miracles; and, in view of a somewhat favourite contention of modern apologists, it is interesting to note that he expressly argues against the notion put forward by Avicenna<sup>2</sup> that the power exercised by the mind over the body belonging to it would be, in the case of a 'pure soul, not enslaved to bodily passions', extended to bodies external to its own.

Rational creatures are ordered by God for their own sake, other creatures for the sake of rational creatures. Being rational, the means by which God orders them is not natural instinct but law. Such divine laws will include injunctions to hold the truth concerning God, for the love and desire towards him which they aim at promoting presuppose a correct conception of their object. Hence Thomas condemns the view that it makes no difference to a man's salvation with what religious belief he serves God. Thus Natural Theology itself proves, according to Thomas, the need of a positive Revelation, the contents of which lie beyond its scope. It is then argued that worship in the proper sense of the word (*latria*) is due to God alone. It is noteworthy that those against whom his reasonings are here directed are those who would worship the natural world and especially

<sup>1</sup> See Augustine, *contra Faustum*, xxvi. 3; *de Gen. ad Lit.* vi. 13; *de Civ. Dei* xxi. 8. With Augustine the order which miracles transgress is rather the 'well-known' or 'usual' order.

<sup>2</sup> *de Anima*, iv. 4.

the heavenly bodies, or idolaters who render divine honours to images supposed to have received 'some virtue or value' from the heavenly bodies. Such idolatry cannot be justified, since even the heavenly bodies themselves are of less dignity than the human soul, and thus not a proper object of worship to man. The characteristic act of worship, which is never offered to any but a being taken to be God, is sacrifice; exterior sacrifice being a symbol of the inner and true sacrifice which is the self-surrender of the human mind to God.

The use of the expression 'divine law' in this last part of the third book of the work which we are engaged in examining is not made very clear. But from Thomas's explanations elsewhere it is plain that he had a revealed law in view. In the *Summa Theologiae*<sup>1</sup> he distinguishes the *lex divina* from the *lex naturalis*, and the *lex naturalis* from the *lex aeterna*. This last is the law by which God governs all his creatures, irrational as well as rational; the *lex naturalis* is 'nothing else than participation in the law eternal of a nature ordained to an end which is above nature'. This divine law is discriminated into the 'old law', and the 'new', adapted respectively to different stages in the development of the race.

The 'divine law' is thus, in Thomas's use of the expression, a 'revealed law'—and it might be thought out of place in a *Summa contra Gentiles*, or, at least, in any book of it except the fourth which is devoted to revealed doctrine, were it not that, despite the importance attached by Thomas to the distinction between the natural and revealed elements in his theology, he always writes as from the position of one in possession of a revealed religion, and writes rather against the Gentiles than to their address; never forgetting to support his reasonings where he can by scriptural testimony. Indeed, in the ninth chapter of the first book he has frankly

<sup>1</sup> 1-2. 91. 2.

announced that such is to be his procedure. He proposes there first to set forth the truth 'which faith'—that is Christian faith—'propounds and reason investigates', adducing arguments both demonstrative and probable for the confirmation of the truth and the conviction of opponents; and then to set forth the truth which exceeds reason, offering in its support solutions of objections and (since demonstration is not here to be had) probable arguments and authorities in support. This last task is undertaken in the fourth book.

The latter part of the third book does not deal with that part of the content of the divine law which in his view 'exceeds reason' but, taking for granted that law as received in the Church, he defends those of its precepts which he thinks can be shown to accord with reason—such as the restriction of the satisfaction of the sexual appetite within the limits of monogamous marriage, and even the three 'counsels' of poverty, virginity, and obedience to vows, which those who were, like himself, members of religious orders considered themselves bound to follow. Lastly, the consideration of a divine law naturally leading to the consideration of its sanctions, he essays to meet the arguments which could be brought against the orthodox doctrine of the rewards and punishments established by God's moral government and to show that it violates no law of justice; although in the crucial article of God's decision to deliver some men from sin and leave others in it, he has nothing to say but to take refuge with the Apostle<sup>1</sup> in the mere will of the supreme Potter.

Thus he arrives at the fourth book, where he abandons altogether the ground of Natural Theology for that of Revelation. Man's natural ways of attaining to the knowledge of God being insufficient they must be supplemented. There are three kinds of knowledge of God possible to man: the first,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 21.

that inferred from the creation by the natural light of reason; the second, that derived from the authoritative revelation to us by God of a truth concerning God beyond the reach of natural reason; and the third, that possessed by the human mind when exalted to a state in which it can have intuitive apprehension of what was before revealed to it. This last kind of knowledge is to be hoped for in another life; the knowledge of faith is (apart from momentary experiences of rapture granted to a few) the highest that can be had this side the grave. Into the fourth book then, which is devoted to what cannot be known of God by the natural light of reason, it will not be appropriate to our present purpose to follow our author.

This very summary account of the *Summa contra Gentiles* of the great Dominican doctor must suffice for the present. It remains to attempt to define his position in the history of Natural Theology especially with reference to what went before and what was to follow.

Thomas Aquinas was the mediating spirit of an age intoxicated with new knowledge and driven hither and thither by divers winds of doctrines. The intellectual world of Anselm, and even that of Abelard, was far less complicated than that of the thirteenth century. The Saracen was no longer merely an intruding infidel to be fought with the arm of spirit and of flesh; no longer one whose inferiority to his Christian rival could be taken for granted. The Christian must plainly go to school to Avicenna and Averroes and many a Moor beside; if success in arms were any proof of divine favour, that favour could be claimed for Saladin, at least as easily as for his crusading foes; while the great Soldan could plainly not be regarded as a cruel barbarian; as good a knight as the best of the chivalry of Christendom, he challenged for himself in Dante's dream<sup>1</sup> a place no worse than that accorded to the heroes and sages of antiquity

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, iv. 129.

whom only lack of Christian faith debarred from the hope of the beatific vision. And not only among the Saracens but among the Jews were found teachers who could not be despised. As we have already seen, if Thomas was to combat the heresies of Averroes, he could find no better means of doing so than by borrowing weapons from the armoury of Saladin's Hebrew physician, the Rabbi Moses Maimonides. Nor was this all. Aristotle himself, the 'Master of those who know',<sup>1</sup> was no longer, as even for Abelard he had been, a mere teacher of logical subtilties. He was revealed, through the discovery of his physical, metaphysical, and ethical works, as offering his readers an all-embracing system, broad-based on a foundation of knowledge and thought before which the mind of mediaeval Europe could not but stand in reverence and awe, but into which it was no easy task to fit the traditional doctrines of Christianity concerning the creation and future doom of the world, and the immortal destiny of every individual soul of man. Again, the spirit of discussion and criticism which Abelard had evoked and which had found a congenial home in that University of Paris which had sprung from the group of students who came about the Peripatetic of Pallet on the hill of St. Geneviève—this spirit was now too powerful to be laid even by the drastic methods of the Inquisition, which had succeeded to the milder kind of persecution suffered by Abelard at the hands of his contemporaries. It had found its way into the citadel of orthodoxy. Peter Lombard, who had been reckoned with Abelard, Gilbert de la Porrée, and Peter of Poitiers as one of the 'four labyrinths of France', was now, as the Master of the Sentences, the very incarnation of theological science, whom every divine must study and comment even as he did the Scriptures themselves. Nor was it only in the Schools that the Christian religion had to fight for its own hand. The south of France was full of heretics who combined

<sup>1</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, iv. 131.



a revolt against the conceptions of the dominant Church with a Manichæan dualism which was beyond question fundamentally incongruous alike with the speculative and the moral principles of Christian civilization. One of the two great mendicant orders which had been called into existence (as Pope Innocent III saw them in the dream which Giotto painted at Assisi) to prop the tottering Church, had itself brought forth the vagaries of the Spiritual Franciscans who, relying on the prophecies of the Abbot Joachim, saw in the Saint of Assisi the forerunner of a new age of the Spirit, in which the existing system of compromise with the world represented by the ecclesiastical hierarchy would disappear. And lastly, at the very centre of the political world had appeared the significant figure of the Emperor Frederic II, to whom the Greek Christian was as good as the Latin and the Mussulman as either,—the brilliant forerunner, in what have sometimes been called, inappropriately enough, ‘the ages of faith’, of the *État laïque*, the secular State, of modern times.

The position of Thomas in this period of storm and stress was, from the point of view of his contemporaries, much less central than Abelard’s in the preceding century had been. The intellectual world of Western Europe had become too large and complex for any one man to play the part of that romantic hero of the Schools. It is only, perhaps, in retrospect that one can recognize in Thomas the mediating spirit of the time; and it must never be forgotten that an account of him, even were it far more adequate than this poor sketch, would not be an account of a time in which there were so many thinkers beside him engaged in the same problems in independence or rivalry of him, of whom I have no space to say anything. Still, the authoritative position which he attained in the theological tradition of the Roman Church and the relation of discipleship in which the great poet of the Middle Ages stood towards him

mark him out as on the whole the most representative figure of the classical age of Scholasticism, and justify the choice of his Natural Theology for special consideration on the present occasion. The three outstanding characteristics of Thomas are constructive power, critical acumen, intellectual sobriety. Certainly inferior in metaphysical genius to Anselm, and probably to Abelard in genuine originality of mind, the task laid upon Thomas by the spirit of his age was that of establishing a synthesis between the dogma of the Church and as much of the teaching of Aristotle and his Commentator as could be harmonized therewith. The synthesis which he effected was as stable as the factors admitted of its being ; and, if it was not ultimately satisfactory, its failure was not due to any lack of thoroughness on Thomas's part in tackling each difficulty that lay in his path as it arose ; it was due to real incompatibility in its elements. That among the great Schoolmen in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries he alone has exercised to a considerable degree a direct influence over modern thought we may put to the account of the third quality I have ascribed to him—intellectual sobriety. It has been said that the candidate for initiation into the highest mysteries of philosophy should submit to a bath of Spinoza, the God-intoxicated as Novalis called him.<sup>1</sup> One feels that the essential sobriety of St. Thomas's mind would have shrunk from this ordeal ; his repudiation of the Ontological Argument of Anselm, and his treatment of the doctrine that the Active Intellect was more than *aliquid animae*, show him curiously out of sympathy—however he may have been justified in many of his criticisms—with the type of thought which finds its completest expression in Spinoza's recognition that, in our apprehension of God, God apprehends himself.<sup>2</sup> But the same sobriety made him no less averse from any licence of speculation respecting created but superhuman spirits or starry influences.

<sup>1</sup> See Caird, *Philosophy of Kant*, 1st ed. iii. 43.

<sup>2</sup> See *Eth.* v. 36.

While he did not question the authority of the false Areopagite in his teaching about the heavenly hierarchy or of Aristotle in his concerning the star-moving Intelligences—two doctrines which his great disciple Dante wove together into one splendid system of poetical imagery—Thomas was in no way disposed to push it further on his own account. Roger Bacon, whose devotion to physical science has made him of all the Schoolmen the one whose name has been most respected by those most scornful of his fellows, was far less sober-minded than Thomas in these respects. Unlike Thomas, he was ready to indulge in fanciful speculations on the influence of the heavenly bodies upon human affairs and like many of his order—the Franciscan—was much impressed by the prophecies of the Abbot Joachim of Fiore, in whom Thomas refused to see either a sound divine or a genuine prophet.<sup>1</sup>

Again, Roger Bacon called the doctrine, which he ascribes to all the moderns—and indeed Duns Scotus shared it with Thomas—that the Active Intellect is but a part of the human soul, ‘a very great error’. He himself held on the contrary that it is to be identified with ‘God or angels that illuminate us’,<sup>2</sup> claiming as in accord with him on this matter William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris, and the two

<sup>1</sup> He devotes one of his *Opuscula* to an exposition of a decretal condemnation of some observations of Joachim on the teaching of the Master of the Sentences concerning the Trinity, excusing him from intentional error *utpote in subtilibus fidei dogmatibus rudis*. He also argues in the *Summa Theologiae* (I-2. 106. 4), without naming Joachim, against the doctrine, characteristic of the Calabrian seer, that a new age of the Holy Spirit is to be looked for, which will surpass that of the Gospel as the Gospel Age that which went before it. The New Law of the Gospel, says Thomas, is to last till the end of the world. In his commentary on the fourth book of the *Sentences* (xiv. 9. 1 a. 3) he expressly ascribes the predictions of the Abbot Joachim to *conjectura mentis humanae* and not to *propheticus spiritus*; hence we cannot depend upon their fulfilment. It is noteworthy that this matter of Joachim's prophetic inspiration is one of the few points in which Dante (see *Par.* xii. 140, 141) expressly deserts the teaching of Thomas.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. Tert.* c. 23, ed. Brewer, p. 74.

philosophers of his own day whom he specially honoured, Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, and the latter's friend and counsellor, the Oxford Franciscan Adam Marsh.

We must observe, however, that Roger finds in this doctrine concerning the Active Intellect a basis for the recognition in the philosophical teaching on non-Christian thinkers of a divine inspiration, and in so doing enters on a track which sometimes led those who trod it, as it did Roger himself, into fantastic imaginations, such as make his discussions of these subjects seem far further off from us than those of the sober Thomas; but which led away from what we have seen reason to regard as Thomas's cardinal mistake in respect of our subject—his hard and fast delimitation of the spheres of Natural and Revealed Theology; a delimitation, as I have already pointed out, in which he departed from the standpoint not only of Abelard but of Anselm and of Anselm's master Augustine. It would not be correct to credit Thomas with too much originality in making this new and in some ways unfortunate departure. It lay in the direct road, as soon as the three 'laws' of Moses, Mohammed, and Christ came to be compared by people who found themselves in a world of ideas to which Christians, Mohammedans, and Jews were alike contributing, and of political arrangements in which the Mohammedan might any day predominate over the Christian or the Christian over the Mohammedan. The close historical relationship between the three 'laws' made it comparatively easy to abstract a common basis of faith and practice, to which each added a different special group of peculiar doctrines and duties. The notion of such a common religion of nature had been worked by Mohammedans before it had become familiar to Christians. The curious romance of Ibn Tufail, which Pococke, the great Oxford Orientalist of the seventeenth century, published with a Latin translation by his son, was as old as the ninth century, though on reading it one feels

that it might be the product of a spiritually-minded deist of the seventeenth or eighteenth. Indeed it is said, soon after its publication by Pococke, to have obtained a wide circulation as an edifying book in the Society of Friends. In this book the hero—the *Philosophus Autodidactus*, as he is called in Pococke's translation,—cast on a desert island as a child, grows up by mere contemplation of the works of God into a sage and saint, and when he comes in mature life across the teachings of the Koran, finds that they do but confirm what he has already learned by the light of nature. I do not know whether this work was actually known to the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages ; but thoughts of the same kind were not unfamiliar. The comparison of religions and the belief in a Natural Religion resulting from the comparison were in the air. William of Auvergne, who was Bishop of Paris 1228-49, wrote a work *de Legibus*. The word was whispered round that there were daring unbelievers and perhaps among them the head of the Holy Roman Empire himself, Frederic II—against whom the faithful of all three 'laws' might unite in indignation, for they had blasphemously spoken of the three great legislators as the 'three impostors'.

But it was the recognition of Thomas Aquinas as a Saint and Doctor of the highest authority that made his delimitation of the spheres of Natural and Revealed religion a part of orthodoxy. Roman Catholic writers are still apt to apologize for St. Anselm's failure to observe the line which St. Thomas drew as pardonable in one who lived at a time of comparative ignorance and looseness of thought on the subject. And it is from the delimitation which we thus specially associate with St. Thomas that Deism sprang, with its disregard of what reason admittedly could not discover, and its concentration upon what seems to us a somewhat arbitrary extract from the historical religion of Europe as that which the human mind left to itself must necessarily approve.



I shall now pass from St. Thomas with a short consideration of his position in reference to the *damnosa hereditas*, as I have more than once called it, bequeathed by Plato and Aristotle to mediaeval theology—the doctrine of the divinity of the stars. The attitude of Thomas here was characteristic. He accepted at the hands of the great Master of natural knowledge the notion of the stars as made, not of the four elements whereof the sublunary world is composed, but of the ‘quintessence’; as moving in their orbits with a motion which there was nothing (beside the inspired word of Scripture) to suggest had ever begun or could ever end; as guided in their spheres by spiritual beings, each standing to the sphere it moved as God to the whole system.

But in his attitude we can trace, together with his deference to Aristotelian authority, his general aversion from fantastic speculation, and his accustomed insight into the genius of Christianity; and both of these tended to lead him in the direction of minimizing the theological importance of the Aristotelian cosmology. The heavenly bodies are only bodies; they are less, therefore, in dignity than the minds of men, which thus can owe them no reverence, nor—except indirectly as conditioned by their own bodies, upon which these higher bodies no doubt exert an influence—are human minds subject to their motions. As for their spiritual or angelic movers, they are not souls that animate the heavenly bodies, but unembodied Intelligences acting upon them from without; and we are in no direct contact with them, nor is the providential care of God over us mediated through them in any special way; though no doubt they play their part in the general providential scheme. Thus the doctrine of the divinity of the stars has not exercised a specially important influence on Thomas’s natural theology; but his acceptance of the Aristotelian cosmology contributed to the neglect of his, as of

other mediaeval philosophy by thinkers who came after the establishment of another system, under which the heavenly bodies appeared incredibly vaster and more distant than they did in the Middle Ages, and at the same time were acknowledged to be of the same stuff as the 'bodies terrestrial', and to move in accordance with the same laws of motion as obtain in the sublunary world.

## V

### RAYMOND OF SEBONDE

THE three theologians we have now considered—Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas—are all great men, who may fitly be taken as representative of their respective epochs. In Anselm we saw the understanding at peace with a tradition in the exploration of whose contents it has found its own satisfaction. In Abelard we saw the understanding, equipped with a new critical method, continuing this exploration, and, while no longer able to find satisfaction therein so readily, yet not despairing of doing so, even though perhaps at the price of some purging or remodelling of the tradition. This hardihood, we saw, excited a strenuous opposition on the part of those who could not brook any tampering with tradition or uncertainty as to its contents—an opposition which, while able to impair Abelard's reputation, did not avail to put his new method out of use; so that the substantial victory remained after all with Abelard. With the recovery of the greater Aristotelian treatises and the study of their Arabian interpreters, the discordances which existed between theological and philosophical traditions became apparent. Just as the traditional struggle of Church and State enabled the individual to work out his political emancipation from each by the help of the other, the ultimate intellectual emancipation of the individual was rendered possible by the struggle of the two authoritative traditions. It was only postponed by the sincere efforts of the great schoolmen to accomplish a synthesis, which by the most influential of them all, St. Thomas, was only accomplished at the cost of abandoning such a confidence in the

possibility of a complete rational comprehension of the religious tradition as Abelard had shared with Anselm, and by means of an attempt to establish a hard and fast line between the spheres of Reason and of Faith, which brought men far on the way to that paradox of a double truth, by means of which the latter Scholasticism was to confess its intellectual bankruptcy. The importance of my fourth hero, Raymond of Sebonde, may, in comparison with that of my former three, be said to be factitious. Two facts which may be called without absurdity accidental have given him a prominence in the histories of Natural Theology which on his own account he scarcely deserves: the fact that he gave to his book the title of *Theologia Naturalis*, and the fact that Montaigne, having been caused by his father to translate it in his youth, used it afterwards as a peg on which to hang the longest of his immortal essays.

Raymond of Sebonde was of Barcelona. The name Raymond was common in those parts. Thus it was a favourite name in the sovereign house of the Counts of Toulouse, and it was borne by that singular personage of the thirteenth century, the schoolman-missionary and father of Catalan poetry, Raymond Lull. Of the life of Raymond of Sebonde we know little. He is said to have been a graduate in arts and medicine, and to have been persuaded, as he passed through Toulouse on the way to Paris, to remain there as professor at the University. At Toulouse he died at a date variously given as 1432, 1434, and 1436. His book is called *Theologia Naturalis sive Liber Creaturarum*: and opened with a Prologue printed in the earliest editions, but placed on the Index in 1595. Gabriel Compayré, the eminent French writer on education, who in 1877 made Raymond the subject of a thesis for his Paris doctorate, says that the embargo was removed under Benedict XIV. But this statement seems to be incorrect. For the book is included in the Index printed by authority

of that Pope in 1744 and still appears in that put forth under Leo XIII in 1896. But, like all books published prior to 1600, it was omitted from the Index issued by the authority of the last-mentioned Pope in 1900. Most accounts of him that are to be found in encyclopaedias and the like state that the ground of the prohibition of Raymond's Prologue was the exclusive position assigned in it to the Bible as the source of revealed truth; but it is difficult, after the perusal of the offending preface, to believe that this can really have been the reason. No doubt in 1595 any excessive emphasis on the superiority of Scripture over the tradition of the Church might have seemed at Rome likely to afford undesirable encouragement to Protestant controversialists. But no such excessive emphasis is to be found in Raymond's Prologue, and I entertain no doubt at all that what brought down ecclesiastical censure upon it was not its language about the Bible, but its language about the other book of God, the book of nature, language which goes near to making the written Word superfluous.

The knowledge of 'the book of the creatures or book of nature', says the condemned Prologue, 'is necessary, natural, and fit for every man; by means of it he is enlightened both as to himself and as to his Maker, and as to the whole duty of man as man; and moreover of the rule of nature, whereby every one also is aware of all his natural obligations, whether to God or to his neighbour. And not only will he be enlightened so as to know all this, but he will be moved and roused of his own free will and with gladness to will and to do it and that from the heart. And not only so, but this knowledge teaches every man to recognize indeed without difficulty or toil every truth that man needs to know whether concerning man or concerning God, and all that man needs to know for his salvation and perfection and progress in the way that leads to life eternal. Moreover, by means of this knowledge man comes to know without



difficulty whatever is contained in Holy Scripture, and whatever is narrated or commanded therein by means thereof comes to be known infallibly and with great assurance. So that the human understanding may put aside all disputation and with all security and certitude assent to the whole of Holy Scripture, and is given such assurance that it can no longer doubt on any point of that science ; and by it can be solved every problem that needs solving, whether concerning God or concerning himself, and that without difficulty. In this book also is contained the knowledge of all the erroneous opinions of the ancient philosophers and of the heathens and unbelievers ; and by means of the knowledge thereof the whole Catholic faith is made known and proved to be true, and also every heresy which is opposed to the Catholic faith and proved to be false and mistaken'—and so forth, in a style, it must be admitted, of tedious repetition. 'And further by this science any man understands easily all the holy doctors,'—who are thus, we may observe, duly placed side by side with the Bible. 'Thus this knowledge is as it were an alphabet of all duties, which thus should be known first of all like an alphabet. And so every one who wishes to understand all the doctors and the whole of Holy Scripture should possess this knowledge which is the light of all the sciences.' 'It is', he says again, 'the root and origin and foundation of all the sciences which are necessary to man's salvation.' 'It needs the assistance of no other science or art.' 'It is the first of all, and necessary to man and orders all others to a good end and to what is for man truly true and profitable ; for this science teaches man to know himself and wherefore he was created and by whom, what is his good and what his evil, what he ought to do, and to what and to whom he is bound, and if a man knows not all this, of what profit are other sciences to him ?' Plainly we have here not a glorification of the Bible at the expense of tradition, but

an assertion of the pre-eminent importance of natural knowledge, somewhat in the spirit of Roger Bacon (only Raymond is thinking rather of what lies open to every attentive sense, and not of methodical experimental investigation) and quite out of keeping with the spirit of the Thomistic tradition, which had become authoritative in the Roman Church by the time at which Raymond's Prologue was placed, no doubt for this very reason, upon the Index. 'This science', we read again, 'is accessible alike to laymen and to clerks and to every condition of men and can be had in less than a month and without trouble, nor to possess it need one have learned anything by heart or keep any written book, nor can it be forgotten when once obtained.' 'And it makes man cheerful, modest, kind and obedient, and causes him to hate all vices and sins and so love virtue : it puffs not up nor makes proud its possessor. Moreover it proves by means of arguments which none can gainsay, for it proves by means of what is most certain to every man by experience, that is by all the creatures and by the natural qualities of man himself and by man himself, and by what man knows most assuredly of himself by experience, and above all by the inner experience which every man has of himself ; and so this science seeks no other witness than a man's own self. At first this science appears very low and worthless, but in the end there cometh of it most noble fruit.' 'And this science alleges no authorities, neither Holy Scripture nor any doctors, nay rather it confirms Holy Scripture, and by means of it a man believes firmly in the Holy Scripture. And so in the order of our procedure it comes before Holy Scripture ; and so there are two books given us of God, to wit the book of the world of creatures or book of nature, and another, which is the book of Holy Scripture.' 'The book of Scripture is given to man in the second place, and that when the first book was not available, in that man, being blind, could not read in the

first book. But yet the first book of creatures is common to all men, while that of Scripture is not common to all men, since only clerks know how to read in it. Moreover the first book cannot be falsified or mutilated or falsely interpreted.' 'One and the same Lord both created the world and revealed the Holy Scripture and therefore they agree together and do not contradict one another. Yet the first is connatural with us, the second supernatural.' And once more: 'In the book of nature a man can study by himself, and without a teacher, the doctrine that he needs. God created this whole visible world for himself and gave it us as his own natural and infallible book, written with the finger of God, wherein the creatures are as it were letters devised, not by the will of man but by the wisdom of God, to convey to man wisdom and teaching necessary for his salvation. No man indeed can see or read by himself in this book ever open though it be unless he be enlightened by God and purified from original sin; and so none of the ancient heathen philosophers could read this knowledge, because they were blinded so to the knowledge of themselves, although in that book they did read some knowledge, and all which they had they derived thence.' These quotations sufficiently bear out, I think, my contention that the statement about the reason for which the book of Raymond was placed on the Index, which goes on being copied into one book of reference out of another, cannot possibly be true; but that there is a very obvious reason for the censure in Raymond's doctrine of the all-sufficiency of the book of Nature, the constant reiteration of which might well cause to pass unnoticed such a passing reference as that which denies to the unbaptized the power of reading in it all that it contains. Even if this were noticed, it would still be Raymond's teaching that the whole of the knowledge necessary to salvation could (at least by the baptized) be obtained thence without a further revelation.

The considerable extracts I have given from the Prologue may seem to establish this point ; but they may also make you wonder what there was in an author so little conspicuous for grace or charm to take the fancy of a great man of letters. And yet, as I have said, Raymond of Sebonde owes great part of his celebrity to the attention paid him by his illustrious apologist, Montaigne. Montaigne himself has told us at the beginning of the *Apologie de Raimond Sebonde*<sup>1</sup> how Pierre Bunel, an eminent Latinist from Toulouse (where Raymond himself had taught in the early part of the preceding century), after visiting Montaigne's father at his country seat, presented him, on his departure, with a copy of the *Theologia Naturalis*; he thought his host, who knew Spanish well, would be easily able to read it, since it was written in a sort of Spanish tagged with Latin terminations (*d'un espagnol barragouiné en terminaisons latines*), and would find profitable for the times, in which the 'novelties of Luther' were beginning to be talked of and to unsettle the foundations of the received creed. At first the elder Montaigne would seem to have made no use of his friend's gift ; but 'some days before his death, he accidentally found it under a heap of other papers put aside, and bade' his son 'put it for him into French'. This Michel dutifully did, and his version (which contains, by the way, the suspect Prologue) is still extant. 'It is an easy task', says he, 'to translate such authors as this, where there is scarce any question of rendering aught but the matter ; whereas with writers who have paid much attention to grace and elegance of language, it is dangerous to undertake to translate them ; one runs the risk of rendering them into a style less vigorous than their own. It was an occupation quite new for me ; but chancing to be at leisure, and being unable to refuse obedience to the command of the best father that ever was, I accomplished

<sup>1</sup> *Essais*, ii. 12.

it as well as I could ; and he took a singular pleasure in it and gave order for it to be printed ; which was done after his death. I found the author's imaginations fine, the arrangement of his work good and his intention pious.'

Many folk, he tells us, amused themselves with reading this translation, especially ladies ; and the object of his *Apology for Raymond of Sebonde* is to defend it from two chief objections which he found made to it ; one that the Christian faith should not be made to depend on human reasonings ; and the other that Raymond's reasonings are weak and easily confuted. Of the book itself Montaigne's judgement is this : ' The author's end is bold and courageous ; for he undertakes, by human and natural arguments, to establish and defend against the atheists all the articles of the Christian religion ; wherein, to say the truth, I found him so firm and so happy, that I do not believe it is possible to do better in the conduct of that argument, and think that none has done so well as he. This work seeming to me too rich and fine to be the work of an author of so little fame and of whom we know nothing but that he was a Spaniard who professed medicine at Toulouse about two hundred years ago, I once asked Adrian Turnebus, who knew everything, what the book could be. He answered that it was a quintessence extracted from St. Thomas Aquinas ; for in truth, the genius of that great man, so inexhaustibly rich in learning and so wonderful in subtilty, was the only one capable of such imaginations. In any case, whoever be the first author and inventor of the work—and there is no reason without better grounds to deny the title to Sebonde—he was a very sufficient man of great and excellent parts.' Doubtless it was this commendation of an author so much read and admired at the beginning of the seventeenth century that made Raymond of Sebonde's fortune at that time, and that led Grotius, for instance, in the first page of his book, *On the Truth of the Christian*



*Religion*, to excuse himself for attempting a task already so ably performed by Raymond. The publisher of the 1654 edition, a certain Pierre Compagnon of Lyons, in his dedicatory preface, addressed to the Chancellor Pierre Séguier, refers to Montaigne's esteem as justifying him in his bringing Sebonde again before the world. But Montaigne's *Apology* has really very little to do with its professed theme. Any one who should expect from it to find Raymond laying the foundations of theology (with Mr. Balfour) in a sceptical distrust of human reason would be disappointed; nor indeed, though the general drift of Montaigne's essay might lead to the expectation, does the essayist anywhere attribute to him such a position. Nothing could, indeed, be less sceptical than Raymond's quixotic confidence in the possibility of establishing by the help of the book of Nature all the articles of the Christian faith; and, if the theology may be considered, as Turnebus suggested, in the light of an extract from St. Thomas, there is no trace in the book of Thomas's characteristic line of demarcation between the spheres of Natural and Revealed Theology. Montaigne himself, as we saw, says that it was a book in translating which one had only to consider the matter. Still he speaks with approval of its style, and even of the imagination shown in it; and one may suspect that the fact that it is being written as a continuous treatise, without the scholastic device of advancing objections and solving them, and without a parade of authorities, and so is for most people more readable, because more continuous, than a treatise in regular scholastic form, told in its favour with so thorough a son of the Renaissance as its great apologist.

We have already given some account of Raymond's glorification in his Prologue of the 'book of Nature' or 'of the Creatures'—a glorification too unqualified, as we saw, for the sensitive representatives of a tradition claiming

supernatural authority in the meticulous days of the Counter-Reformation. It remains to call attention to what may be found interesting in the body of the book. It will be seen that Adrian Turnebus was by no means right in supposing it to be an extract from St. Thomas. After the first four *Tituli* or chapters, Raymond conveniently sums up as follows what he has so far maintained: 'From what has been already said we may conclude the nature of the being of the universe: that it is, as it were, a body orderly divided into distinct parts; has made us ascend by four steps to another Being; and has manifested to us this other Being, by which the whole being of the universe was newly brought forth out of nothing. And in the first being we found that there of necessity existed four grades in all: to wit, being, living, feeling, and understanding or free will. And moreover we found in it that *posse* (power or capacity), which does not constitute a grade, but is the foundation of all grades and is also included in all the grades. And thus we have found beyond possibility of mistake, that the Maker of the universe has being, feeling, understanding, will and power; and that in him all these are one and the same with his being. And further we found out the conditions, properties and excellences of the divine Being: how it is a Being that is uncreated, original, eternal, unchangeable, incorruptible, and so forth. And between all these properties there is no inequality; because such is God's life, intelligence, will and power, as is his being. But notwithstanding all things agree with God in respect of their being; yet some things are nearer to him than others in respect of life, some in respect of understanding, some in respect of power; of life, in that he lives for ever; of understanding, in that he is wise, prudent, true and the judge of all; of will, in that he is good, gentle, kind, holy, upright, just, gracious; of power, in that he is almighty. So then we first know God to have being, life, perception,

understanding, will and power. And hereby we afterwards know that all other things have agreement with him ; and all things are included in his being. Join then one thing with another and compare them together, and you will understand wonderful things concerning him. For example, join understanding with power and will ; because his power is as great as his will and his understanding, and *vice versa* ; because they are all one with another and one and the same with his being ; and so shalt thou have the best knowledge of God.' There is nothing in this discussion seriously divergent from the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas ; but it is not strictly on his lines. Thus Raymond carefully enough expounds the diversity of the being which we ascribe to God from that which we ascribe to the creature : but he does not say with Thomas that *esse* is not used univocally—in the same sense—of God and of other things. Again, his is a different attitude from that of Thomas towards the Averroist (not to say Aristotelian) doctrine of the eternity of the world, though he mentions neither Averroes nor Aristotle in connexion with it—for he avoids, as we have seen, the mention of authorities. For Thomas held that good reasons could be alleged for it and good reasons against it ; neither it nor its opposite could be demonstrated to be necessary ; and Revelation alone decides the question for us in a negative sense. This, of course, involves the admission that the eternity of the world is not inconsistent with its complete dependence upon God, whose act of creation, calling it into being out of nothing, might have been exercised from all eternity. Raymond, on the other hand, concludes against the eternity of the world without reference to revelation, mainly from the consideration that it would suggest that the world is necessary to God, and was a necessary emanation of his nature, instead of the free work of his goodness. It is true that this is an argument rather from the fitness of things than from irrefragable

principles of reason. But still the line taken is different from that of Thomas.

After another nine chapters Raymond calls another halt and gives another *generalis epilatio*. 'And so,' he says, 'to sum up all that has so far been shown and revealed to us,<sup>1</sup> by the scale of four degrees in nature we can see how by comparing man, who is in the fourth degree, with other things inferior to him, and them with him, and considering the agreement between them'—i.e. that the qualities of being, life, perception, understanding, some of which appear severally elsewhere, are all combined in him—'we ascended to the recognition of one supreme and infinite nature which is above man.' The chief argument used was that the source of that in which man agreed with the lower creation is surely one, that man certainly does not impart these to the lower creation, and that therefore we must look beyond him for the source of these and higher qualities in himself. 'We thus attained to the knowledge of the nature and greatness of this Supreme Being, finding that in it being, life, perception, and intelligence were other than at the level of nature. We made, therefore, another scale there; and beginning from being went on to other levels and found that in that Supreme Nature which is our God that being and living, perception and intelligence, are all one. Again, we found that being in God was not produced, not received from another, but eternal; and that by that eternal being and nature the whole being of the world and the whole scale of nature was produced, and that out of nothing, and newly. Moreover, by way of this production of the world from nothing which we had already discovered we ascended to one other production of surpassing excellence and eternal; for the supreme joy cannot be in God without the society

<sup>1</sup> I think this use of the word *revelata* here is deliberate and marks a great divergence from Thomas; with his sharp distinction between the knowledge gained by the light of nature and that bestowed by supernatural grace.

and reciprocated love of a Being which is of his own nature; and we concluded this to be the derivation of a Being from the very being of God, and thereby we discovered in the divine nature two eternal Persons, and a production of God from God, and that by way of nature.

‘Again by this production which we have discovered existing in the divine nature we find that there must also necessarily be there another production out of the Divine Being, which is by way of a will and freedom, whereby there proceedeth a third Person in the divine essence. And so, to sum up, we found by means of the scale of nature four things, to wit the Divine Being, and three productions of the Divine Being himself; and three things produced from God. The *first* production, we found, is the production of the world out of nothing and outside of God himself; and the *second* production is that of God from God within himself, from all eternity, by way of nature. The *third* production is that of God from the divine nature by way of will. And the two latter productions are eternal and without beginning or end, and never cease. There then are three beings produced: to wit the world, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and one unproduced, to wit the Father. The Son then is of the Father, the Holy Ghost of the Father and of the Son, and of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as one the world is produced. From all these premises we may conclude a like division wherein are included all things that exist. Everything that exists is either from eternity and from itself; or not from eternity nor from itself: or from eternity, yet not from itself, but from another. In the first member of this division is the Father, in the second the world, in the third the Son and the Holy Ghost. And so by this process we have discovered God three and one, one in essence and three in persons, of whom are all things, in whom are all things, and by whom are all things, who liveth blessed for evermore world without end.’



On this summary we have to observe that it certainly does not represent, as Turnebus suggested it did, the views of St. Thomas. The mind is represented as rising from the consideration of the nature of created things not merely to the discovery of the existence and unity of God, but also to that of the Trinity in his nature. The line drawn by Thomas between the spheres of natural and revealed religion is ignored ; and we may also observe, although it does not belong to our present business to do more than observe it in passing, that Raymond's presentation of the details of the doctrine of the Trinity is in several respects different from, and cannot be thought to have been especially based upon, its presentation by Thomas. Some of its language reminds us of Anselm's ; and we shall see that Raymond accepted the Anselmic definition, if we may so call it, of *Deus* as *id quo nihil majus cogitari potest*,<sup>1</sup> a reminiscence of which occurs also in the section of the book of which we have just had Raymond's summary.

The next occasion on which Raymond, following the convenient practice which has already so much assisted us, pauses to sum up is in the 128th chapter, which I will translate as follows : ' But now, summing up by way of epilogue all that has gone before in this book, we may note how, beginning with creatures of the lower grade and mounting up from the first step and lower scale of nature, we gradually arrived at the genuine apprehension and knowledge of God, supremely mighty, supremely wise and supremely good. So that the creatures have led us and raised us by an ascent and staircase admirably devised to God the Creator of all things, considered as the one supreme principle and Father and Creator of all things. And then a second time we were enabled by creatures to go yet further and approach more closely to God himself and to his love ; since they led us to love God, and showed us that

<sup>1</sup> tit. 64.

we were supremely bound to him and under an obligation above all other obligations to love him with our whole heart. And thus, so far as in them lay, they joined us in a bond of marriage with God. Then we came down again from that supreme Creator to the creatures themselves, so that from the love of the Creator we descended to the love of all creatures ; since in loving God the Creator we love all his creatures, and all things which are his, in so far forth as they are his. And so we love all creatures for his sake. And thus is made our ascent and descent. First an ascent from the creatures to the Creator, then a descent from the Creator to all creatures. For in the first place we loved the creatures because they were fair and good, and because they were serviceable to us, and so we loved them for our own sakes. But in the second place we loved them for their Creator's sake, because they are his and he made them ; nay, we love also our own selves because we too are God's. And this love is perfect, good, enduring, excellent and constant, because it proceeds from the Creator who is the most excellent of all beings, the highest and supreme of all, And in this it is plain that love given to God is not wasted or diminished, nay it grows and is infinitely increased and expanded beyond all measure ; since in the love of God are loved also all creatures and all things which belong to God. And so all are loved by one love and by the power of one love, and there is nothing but is loved in virtue of that love. And therefore our love, when it is given to God is then most high, most general, and most widely extended.'

In the section of which this is a summary occur some of the most interesting passages in the book. What really distinguishes Raymond is not any peculiarity of speculation ; for his theology and philosophy present little that is characteristic ; it is rather a strong sense of the kinship of man with all parts of nature, which may well have charmed Montaigne. Take such a passage as that which I shall now

quote : ' There could not be so great an agreement and likeness between man and the trees, plants and animals, if there were two designers, rulers or artificers in nature ; nor would the operations of plants and trees be carried on so regularly after the manner of human operations, nor would they all be so much in man's likeness, except that he which guided and directed the operations of these trees and plants were the same Being that gave man understanding and that ordered the operations of trees which are after the manner of works done by understanding, since in trees and plants there is no reason nor understanding. And of far more strength is the oneness of matter and sameness of life in man, animals, trees, and plants an evidence of the oneness of their Maker.' ' So then,' he says a little later on, ' how much profit and advantage, how many useful meditations may man gather from this comparison of himself with the lower creatures. Let him not then despise them ; for he ought to love them and think upon the likeness and brotherhood which he hath to them and to be made humble thereby and to let his soul rub itself as it were against them (*fricare animam suam cum eis*)'. One seems to hear an echo of St. Francis here. ' For '—he goes on—' they acknowledge him to be wonderful and more excellent than they in many things ; because he is set over them in a most excellent rank and dignity. But yet consider that thou too art a creature ; nor for all thine excellence canst thou cease to be a creature. Forget not then that thou art of the number of the creatures and canst not separate thyself from their society, because thou agreest with them in much, being made of the same matter by the same Artificer. Exercise thyself therefore in the knowledge of them, because the more thou knowest them the more thou knowest thine own dignity and shalt obtain a greater and surer knowledge of thy Maker. If thou then wouldst know thyself and thy Maker, see that thou first know the creatures,

since the nearer thou drawest to the creatures by knowing them, the nearer shalt thou draw to thyself and to thy Maker. And the farther thou dost remove thyself from the creatures, the farther thou removest thyself from thyself and from thy Maker. If then the knowledge of the creatures increase in thee, there shall increase also in thee the knowledge of thyself and of thy Maker ; and if that be diminished, this shalt be diminished likewise, and if that be annihilated, this is annihilated also ; and if that abide, this abideth also, since this is born from that.'

There is something individual and impressive in this realization of man's kinship with the lower creation, and this confidence that in the knowledge of this lower creation lies the most ready avenue to the knowledge of God. If the former looks back to Francis of Assisi, the latter looks forward to Francis of Verulam. Raymond goes on to say that, if we may hope much for our knowledge from the realization of our likeness to the beings below us in the scale of creation, we may hope even more from the realization of our difference from them. This is the crown of the knowledge ' necessary to our salvation ' as he puts it ; nor is the former knowledge profitable without the latter. The beings below us act by nature, not by understanding and will ; and hence we rank them according to their respective natural capacities ; but men by those ' accidents of free will, which are voluntary and intellectual '. By these *accidentia intellectualia* men are distinguished into many ranks and grades ; among such accidents he reckons power, jurisdiction, office, science, skill, virtue, wisdom ; these are sometimes acquired by men for themselves, sometimes bestowed on them by the bounty of God. They are accidents, for they may be lost without the loss of essential human nature ; yet they ' greatly ennoble man and dignify and exalt human nature, and make one man nobler and even far worthier than another ; without them human nature would be as it were

stripped naked'. It is, perhaps, noticeable that the list of these *accidentia* include distinctions of rank as well as of moral and intellectual attainment; and it is, of course, quite true that the one sort of distinction as much as the other is distinctively human, and can only exist among beings possessed of reason. Only in a clear view, Raymond insists, of the prerogatives which he enjoys above the beasts can man hope to know himself aright and find contentment in thankfulness to his Creator. And here Raymond shows himself a thoroughgoing disciple of Anselm, though according to his usual rule, he makes no mention of his name. The Anselmian definition of *Deus—quo nihil majus cogitari potest*—is represented as a 'rule rooted in man's nature', and he deduces thence, following Anselm's procedure in the *Proslogion*<sup>1</sup>, a more positive representation of God as *quicquid melius cogitari potest*. The so-called Ontological Argument is given just as in Anselm and accepted as the basis of man's knowledge of God, including that of his triune nature. Once more we see how much the omniscient Turnebus was out in his answer to Montaigne's question. Nothing could be more unlike St. Thomas than this assent to Anselm's ontological argument and this inclusion of the triune nature in what can be known of God by pursuing a clue given by the very nature of our thought.

Somewhat later<sup>2</sup> we find another point worthy of remark, namely, an anticipation by Raymond of that curious doctrine of the criterion of truth which nowadays our friends the Pragmatists so often din into our ears. For the rule of affirmation and negation is said to be utility. Man is by nature bound to believe that which is more useful to him, even if he does not understand how it can be. He who will not believe that to be true which is better for himself puts himself as it were in the power of his mortal enemy. This pragmatism, to use the familiar name, is then assigned

<sup>1</sup> c. 15.

<sup>2</sup> tit. 67.



as the justification of religious faith. The doctrines of God's existence, of his unity, of the generation of the Son of God, of God's omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness, of his veracity and other perfections ; of the creation of the world, of the Incarnation, of the resurrection, last judgement, and immortality of the soul, and finally the Christian religion as a whole, are alleged as examples of what we should believe rather than its opposite in each case, because it does us more good than its opposite. For instance, we should believe, he says, ' that a man has already ascended into heaven, rather than the opposite of this proposition, because from this follows the highest degree of hope, consolation, security and joy for human nature ; while to believe the opposite *does no good to man at all*'. And thus ' whoso believes and affirms the Christian faith can in no wise incur blame from God or from any creature, because he believes what is better for human nature than its opposite ; and though the Christian religion were not true, he would be excused before God and all creatures because he affirms and believes the better and more desirable alternative, and that which more conduces to man's good, his advantage, his perfection, in so far as he is a man ; and *this he is bound to do*'. It is, we must note, only what is best for man as man—as a rational being, as Kant would say—that Raymond holds one is thus bound to believe rather than the opposed alternative, not what is best for my private interests as this or that individual. Besides this ' pragmatic ' argument others, more familiar, are mentioned, but in subordination to it. There is the argument that Christianity is preached everywhere with promises of rewards to believers, penalties for unbelievers ; whereas no such threats or promises are held out for disbelief of it. This argument amounts to very much the same as Pascal's famous wager. The argument from the martyrdoms of Christians, to the like of which, it is asserted, unbelief in Christianity cannot point, is also mentioned.

To these succeeds an argument for the existence of God of greater weight ; that from the implication in the very nature of moral distinctions of the existence of a Moral Governor. ' A good argument may,' he says, ' be thus constructed. Man can sin, therefore there is a God ; and similarly man can do well and have merit, therefore there is a God.' The adaptation to man's wants of his earthly environment is also alleged. The service of man by all creatures is a service of man as man, as God's image, not as this or that individual ; hence all men should regard themselves as one man and each love his neighbour as himself. Every man is a brother to every creature of God ; but in a more especial sense of every other man, created like him in the image of that God.

The following section of the book is not summarized like the preceding ones ; we must mention such points in it as seem to be worthy of notice. Not till we have reached the 206th ' title ' is there any question of authority. There the divinity of Christ is proved by the difficulty of believing that his claim to be divine would have been suffered by God to be accepted for so long, had it not been true. No one else has made such a claim ; Mahomet, for example, did not. Had the claim not been justified, how could it survive the shameful death of him who made it ? How explain the exaltation of the Christians who recognize it and the subjection of the Jews who, were it not justified, would but have executed vengeance on God's worst enemy ? Lastly, were not Christ's claim to be divine just, he would be the worst of men and the proudest ; and how is that reconcilable with the manifest excellence of his moral teaching and his humble obedience even to the death of the cross ? The divinity of Christ thus proved, the divine authority of the Bible is proved. It is found to be entirely in harmony with the book of the creatures, differing only in the manner of speech ; the one book teaching *per modum probationis*, the other *per modum praecepti et auctoritatis*. It may be observed

that had the Congregation of the Index really desired to suppress Raymond's recognition of the supreme authority of the Bible, it would not have been the Prologue but these later chapters on which their censure would have lit. But it would be a delusion to suppose that, when Raymond spoke of the Bible, he was in any way intending to distinguish its teaching from that of the Church ; on the other hand he takes for granted that the whole doctrinal system of the Church as he knew it, Papacy, seven Sacraments, nine orders of the ministry, and all the rest, was guaranteed by the authority of the Bible. In no sense is Raymond a forerunner of the Reformation, nor we may be sure was it as savouring of Protestantism that his Prologue fell under the ecclesiastical censure.

A reader of Raymond will find as he proceeds a good deal that is put with a certain freshness and individuality ; but nothing in itself original apart from his enthusiasm for the book of Nature and his confidence that the student of that book will find himself led on without a check to the Christian religion in all its full ecclesiastical development. Christianity is for him, not only in its fundamental principles but in its greatest elaboration, a ' republication of the religion of nature '. This position is developed with ingenuity and not without a certain charm, arising from the obvious sincerity and zeal of the writer ; but it implies a certain lack in him of an eye for difficulties. We may part with Raymond of Sebonde with a recognition that, while he is an author whom the curious in such literature will find worth reading, he is not a thinker of very high rank, and owes the celebrity of his name less to the actual merits of his book than to the novelty of its title and to the happy accident which gave him so illustrious a translator and apologist as Michel Seigneur de Montaigne.

## VI

### PIETRO POMPONAZZI

As a representative of what we call the Renaissance period, I have chosen the Paduan philosopher, Pietro Pomponazzi. In the work of this thinker we see as it were consummated the collapse of the synthesis attempted by the great Schoolmen of the thirteenth century, between the Christian creed and the Aristotelian philosophy ; the doctrine of the different spheres of reason and revelation issuing in manifest incoherence ; and what I have called the *damnosa hereditas* of a belief in the supernatural dignity of the heavenly bodies bequeathed by Plato and Aristotle to the Schoolmen issuing in fatal consequences to the Christian tradition with which the Schoolmen had attempted to combine it. The name of the great Arabian commentator on Aristotle, Ibn Rosch, or as he is called in Latin, Averroes, is bound up with the history of the failure of the Scholastics to establish a stable synthesis between the Christian and the Aristotelian traditions. Two elements were from the first combined in the culture of Western Europe, a classical and a Christian. Transmitted together as part of one heritage by the Christianized Roman Empire to its barbarian invaders, it was not until the twelfth century that the descendants of these were sufficiently equipped to be acutely conscious of the presence in the tradition of civilization of two heterogeneous and even discordant elements. This consciousness once aroused became the occasion of the labours which the great Schoolmen (of whom I took St. Thomas as the most conspicuous representative) bestowed upon the task of reconciliation.

In his well-known book *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* Renan has traced the history of the obstinate resistance offered

to these reconciling efforts by the influence of those factors in the ancient philosophy which, intrinsically least easy to harmonize with Christianity, were especially brought into relief when instruction in Aristotle's meaning was sought from the most celebrated of his non-Christian interpreters.

We have already seen that the two points in the doctrine of Aristotle, which as emphasized by Averroes were clearly inconsistent with Christian tradition, were those of the eternity of the world and the perishableness of the individual soul. As to the first, St. Thomas Aquinas admitted that Aristotle had seemed to assert it, although he argued that there were grounds for supposing that he had done so only as the negation of certain really impossible alternatives which certain philosophers had suggested. Nor did St. Thomas deny it to be in itself compatible with the essential principle of Christian monotheism, for it could be combined with a recognition of the world's eternal dependency upon God. The purely philosophical arguments against it were not satisfactory ; it was indeed to be rejected on the authority of revelation, but only on that authority. As to the second, St. Thomas Aquinas did not admit either that it was the doctrine of Aristotle, or that it was reconcilable with the principles of a true philosophy. Hence he, like his master Albert, was seriously concerned to combat—both of them, indeed, composed treatises especially directed against—the doctrine of the unity of the Intellect in all men, by which Averroes reconciled the assertion of the independence of the human intellect upon the perishable body with that of the perishableness of the individual human soul.

When dealing with St. Thomas Aquinas, I gave some account of the principal points in the great mediaeval debate about the unity of the Intellect. I described the Aristotelian distinction of the Active from the Passive Intellect, the doctrine connected with the name of the ancient



Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, that the Active Intellect was one and the same in all men, and the yet more extreme doctrine of Averroes that not only the Active, but what he called the Possible Intellect also, was one and the same in all men. We saw that the latter doctrine left to individuals as such nothing but the capacity in the sentient nature of man (which, though called the 'passible intellect' was not really regarded as *intellect* properly so called at all), to partake of the Possible Intellect. Immortality on the Averroist view belonged only to that Intellect which is one and the same in all men; that the individuality of any human being could survive death the Averroists denied. Now, as I also pointed out, it can scarcely be doubted that in denying the immortality of the individual soul the Averroists were true to Aristotle's own thought; but it is at the same time true that in holding the Intellect—the Active as well as the Possible—to be *aliquid animae*, a part of the soul, Thomas, although his interest in doing so was stimulated by his desire to defend a doctrine which Aristotle had not held, was nearer to Aristotle's mind than commentators who made of either a separate superhuman being, with whom the human soul in the act of knowledge came into a relation of communion. This view could, indeed, appeal to Aristotle's language about the *νοῦς* or Intellect being *χωριστός* and entering the human soul from without *θύραθεν*.<sup>1</sup> But if the view I took was not mistaken, the defenders of it were giving a different colour to the thought of Aristotle. They were turning what was in the main a theory of the independence of knowledge on psychological conditions into a mythological speculation which, in the form given to it by Averroes, really went far towards making intellectual activity a prerogative of human nature only as the result of a supernatural communication to it.

<sup>1</sup> *de An.* iii. 5. 430 a 17; *de Gen. An.* iii. 2. 736 b 28.

In the earlier stages of this debate the view of Alexander that only the Active Intellect was one and the same in all men, appeared (though St. Thomas Aquinas did not accept it) as a less extreme view than that of Averroes, which made both Active and Passive or Possible Intellect the same in all men. In the later period, to which Pietro Pomponazzi belongs, the Alexandrists had come to be distinguished from the Averroists as a school not only heterodox but materialistic. This is probably to be explained as follows. Averroism, while certainly inconsistent with a doctrine of individual immortality, taught the immortality of the intellectual nature in which individual men are partakers. For this intellectual nature was, under the title of the Possible Intellect, regarded by the Averroists as being one and the same in all men. Their individuality—the individuality of their souls—did not in any way affect the Intellect. Hence they did not hold the mortality of that in their souls which understands or knows. There were those who, like Thomas, made the Intellect a genuine possession of the individual soul, but who were dissatisfied with the proofs alleged by Thomas and others of the capacity in the individual soul to survive the dissolution of the body of which it was by common consent the ‘form’. The traditions of the mediaeval schools made it natural that these thinkers should seek to place this view under the patronage of some ancient writer of authority. Such a writer was most readily found in Alexander of Aphrodisias. But the essence of the view did not lie in a following of Alexander; and his doctrine of the divinity of the Active Intellect does not seem to have played any part in it. This view had indeed, as I have previously said,<sup>1</sup> not been at all in view of earlier opponents of the doctrine of the Unity of the Intellect, like Albert and Thomas. It is true that Roger Bacon in refusing to regard the Active Intellect with Thomas as a part of the soul, and identifying it with God or angels,

<sup>1</sup> p. 270.

quotes in support of his view two Arabians (not Averroes, but Alfarabi and Avicenna) who interpreted Aristotle's statement that it was χωριστός as meaning that it was a *substantia separata*, an expression which to mediaeval writers signified a spiritual being like the angels or devils of Christian tradition. But probably he is not, as has sometimes been supposed,<sup>1</sup> intending to express his sympathy with the tendency carried further by the Averroists, but simply interpreting the Aristotelian phraseology in the light of Augustine's doctrine that it is by divine illumination that man is aware of any truth,<sup>2</sup> a doctrine by the way in which Malebranche long afterwards found the suggestion or at least a confirmation of his celebrated theory that we see all things in God.<sup>3</sup> That is to say, he is really (as Père Mandonnet has justly pointed out in his work on Siger of Brabant<sup>4</sup>), in the rear rather than in the van of the forward movement in the philosophy of his day, which was a movement towards the fuller appropriation of the contents of the Aristotelian philosophy. He would seem to have been apt to rail at the translations of Aristotle made by others, rather than, like St. Thomas Aquinas, to promote the making of them. To identify the Active Intellect with God had nothing in it of alarming consequence to tradition; but it was otherwise with the assertion that the Active and even the Passive Intellect were one and the same in all men, and yet not the same with God, whom all schools alike recognized as the one source of whatever gifts individual souls enjoy. Roger Bacon attributes,<sup>5</sup> it may be added,

<sup>1</sup> e.g. by Renan, Jourdain (*Phil. de S. Thomas d'Aquin* ii. 59), and the editor of the *Opus Majus*, the late Dr. J. H. Bridges (i. p. 38).

<sup>2</sup> *de Civ. Dei*, x. 2; in *Ioan. Tract.* 23 § 5; *de Trin.* xiv. §§ 12, 15; and cf. other passages cited by Malebranche in the preface to the *Recherche de la Vérité*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Recherche de la Vérité*, iii, pt. 2, ch. 6 (ed. 1700 i. pp. 410 foll.); also the preface to the whole work, in which Malebranche shows himself fully aware that he is going back beyond scholastic Aristotelianism to Augustine.

<sup>4</sup> *Siger de Brabant et l'Averroïsme latin du xii<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Fribourg, 1899), pp. 255 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Opus Tertium*, c. 23; ed. Brewer, pp. 74, 75.

his identification of the Active Intellect with God (which if it owed anything to Alexander, did so only mediately through Avicenna) to William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris, and to his favourite masters, the great Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln and his friend the English Franciscan, Adam Marsh, the first teacher in the Franciscan school at Oxford in the middle of the thirteenth century. He relates of the latter the story that, when certain of his fellow friars asked him as a jest to try him, 'What is the Active Intellect?' he replied, 'Elijah's raven', meaning that it was God or an angel; for, since his brethren asked him the question to draw him out and not for the sake of wisdom, he would not express himself more plainly. Nor did any one at the time, so far as we know, associate Bacon's doctrine with the Averroist tendency. On the contrary, when Siger of Brabant, the leader of the Averroists in the University of Paris, who died in exile at Orvieto between 1281 and 1284, was condemned at Paris by the Bishop Stephen Tempier in 1277 at the instance of the secular masters of the theological faculty, some of the positions of St. Thomas (without his name) were condemned at the same time.<sup>1</sup> To a more conservative school Albert and Thomas seemed tarred with the same brush of a revolutionary Aristotelianism with Siger and the Averroists, only to a less degree.<sup>2</sup>

Of what was called Alexandrism then in the fifteenth century, which, with Thomas but not in the same interest, denied Averroes' doctrine of the unity of the Possible Intel-

<sup>1</sup> See 81. 96. 191; *Chart. Univ. Paris*, 548, 549, 554. Others of the censures may perhaps have been directed against Roger Bacon; see Mr. A. G. Little in the volume of Oxford Commemoration Essays on *Roger Bacon*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Siger was placed at the left hand of St. Thomas in Paradise by Dante (*Par.* x. 136), who perhaps knew little of him except that he was a great Aristotelian and that the academical opponents of St. Thomas had also been his. See Mandonnet's *Siger de Brabant*, ch. 12 (pp. 293, 294).

lect, and accepted what was almost certainly the genuine Aristotelian doctrine of the perishableness of the individual soul, the chief seat was the University of Padua. Padua was a seat of medical learning, and the reputation of the medical profession for orthodoxy never stood high in the Middle Ages (nor perhaps has done so since), while in the University of the notoriously tolerant Venetian Republic speculation enjoyed a larger measure of liberty than was often allotted to it in contemporary seats of learning.

To hold that the soul was not immortal would hardly however have been possible, even at Padua, except under the protection of the doctrine of double truth. From a very early period Averroists had taught this doctrine. Albert the Great mentions<sup>1</sup> that they did so; and the condemnation of Siger's views by Stephen Tempier in 1277 confirms his statement.<sup>2</sup> Albert himself and his pupil St. Thomas<sup>3</sup> rejected it. But the latter's sharp distinction between truths revealed and truths attainable by natural reason served to encourage it; although he did not allow that Revelation, which might (as in the instance of the question of the world's eternity) demand the rejection of an opinion capable of defence on rational grounds, was ever found to contradict legitimate conclusions of reason. Roger Bacon, who often differed from Albert and Thomas, was of one mind with them in rejecting the doctrine of a double truth. But in the later Middle Ages it became more widely spread. It obtained a footing in the orthodox schools with Duns<sup>4</sup> and William Ockham.<sup>5</sup> It was especially detested by the

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theol.* ii. 13. qu. 77, § 3: *Opp.* xviii. 380.

<sup>2</sup> *Chart. Univ. Paris*, i. 543.

<sup>3</sup> See the end of *Opusculum* xvi, *de Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas*, a tract written against Siger of Brabant.

<sup>4</sup> *Cp. Rep. Paris*, iv. 43, qu. 3, § 18 (t. xi, p. 848).

<sup>5</sup> *in Sent.* i. i. 5 E. Contradictories cannot be allowed to be both true except when stated in Scripture or in an authoritative pronouncement of the Church, or necessarily inferred from one or the other.



scholar missionary and martyr Raymond Lull.<sup>1</sup> It would be wrong to suppose that the doctrine could not have been held by any one in good faith; though it would probably not have commended itself to any one who was not more intent on securing for himself freedom to speculate in philosophy than on defending the tradition of theology. But in Pomponazzi it was almost certainly ironical.

We should expect to find in Pomponazzi, going along with his denial of the immortality of the soul, a general view of the world of the type which we are now in the habit of calling naturalistic. Nor is our expectation disappointed. But Pomponazzi's naturalism is of a very different colour to that to which we are nowadays accustomed. He had of course no inkling of the mighty change in our notion of the material universe which was not long afterwards to be inaugurated by Copernicus. The effect of that change was to destroy the old distinction of the heavens and the earth. The earth was to become a heavenly body; and the substance of the heavenly bodies was no longer to be regarded as quintessential, but of the same sort as the substance of the earth. The motions too of the heavenly bodies were no longer to be regarded as of a kind quite different from those that occur in the sublunary world; nor indeed as simple or uncompounded motions at all. Hence the naturalism of our days is quite without the feature which was most conspicuous in the naturalism of the age preceding, namely the belief in the determination of all events by such influences of the heavenly bodies as the astrologer endeavoured to investigate. This belief is to us so strange, and is apt to seem so fantastic and superstitious, that it is not without an effort that we realize that it was the very soul of mediaeval naturalism. We must also observe that what I have several times described as an unfortunate legacy

<sup>1</sup> See his *Encomium*, § 19, by Nicolas de Pax, printed in *Acta Sanctorum*, Jun. t. v. p. 677. I owe the reference to Renan, *Averroès*, p. 257.

from ancient to mediaeval philosophy the doctrine of the supernatural character of the heavenly bodies, being held in common by what from the point of view of Christianity were regarded respectively as the orthodox and the heterodox schools, was just what weakened the former in their opposition to the naturalism of the latter, since they themselves had gone so far along the same road. Nor must it be supposed that this form of naturalism became extinct immediately upon the establishment of the heliocentric theory. That theory, indeed, did not by any means win its way at once to general acceptance. Belief in mysterious influences of the heavenly bodies, distinct from those explored by astronomers, and strangely linked with the affairs of men, haunted not only popular fancy but even natural science for a very long time after the Averroism of the school of Padua, instead of being the nursery of daring speculation, had become a curious relic of mediaeval antiquity. Thus George Fox tells us in his *Journal*<sup>1</sup> that one morning, 'as I was sitting by the fire, a great cloud came and a temptation beset me, but I sat still. And it was said "All things come by nature", and the elements and stars came over me so that I was in a manner quite clouded with it.' These 'elements and stars' stood for a naturalism rather of the older type which is seen in Pomponazzi than the later type to which we are accustomed.

It is now time to turn to a closer consideration of Pomponazzi himself. He was born at Mantua, September 16, 1462, graduated in medicine at Padua 1487, and taught in that university from 1488 to 1509, when the schools there were closed in consequence of the war resulting from the League of Cambrai, which allied the Pope, the Emperor, France, and Spain against the Republic of Venice. From that date till 1512 he taught at Ferrara, and afterwards at

<sup>1</sup> 1648, ed. Armistead, i. 65.

Bologna, where he died in 1525. His most celebrated work is the treatise *de Immortalitate Animae*, published in 1516. This aroused the opposition alike of the orthodox party and of the Averroists, whose favourite doctrine of the unity of the whole Intellect it denied. We have two Apologies for it from his own pen. The earlier of these is the *Apologia* of 1518, against a work of which he speaks with respect as the best of the criticisms which his own work had called forth, composed by one who had been his pupil and who professes a great respect and affection for his former teacher, by name Gaspar Contarini, afterwards Bishop of Belluno, and one of the reforming party within the Church of Rome to which our English Cardinal Pole also belonged. The other defence (which I have not read) is the *Defensorium* of 1519, against Nifo or Niphus, a personage of note at the time, who represented those who attempted to reconcile with the doctrine of Averroes that of the immortality of the individual soul. Such an emasculated Averroism appears to have been in the Italy of that day regarded as philosophical orthodoxy. Its principal champion at Padua in Pomponazzi's time was a certain Alessandro Achillini, who is celebrated in the history of natural science as an anatomist, and who was from first to last a strong opponent of Pomponazzi. This Nifo himself had at an earlier date been suspected of heterodoxy; but he had rehabilitated himself, and had been commissioned to reply to Pomponazzi by Pope Leo X, who had been stirred up to take some action. A papal brief was issued against Pomponazzi in 1518, calling upon him to recant his opinion that according to the principles of philosophy and the teaching of Aristotle the rational soul must be regarded as mortal. But, as Renan has remarked,<sup>1</sup> 'What serious measures could be expected from a Bull countersigned Bembo and ordering one to believe in immortality?' Cardinal Pietro Bembo, famous as a scholar and a patron

<sup>1</sup> *Averroès*, p. 363.

of learning and the arts, was vehemently suspected of believing as little in immortality as Pomponazzi himself. He appears to have protected the philosopher, who expresses his gratitude in a note appended to the *Apologia*. It was likely enough that, as Renan adds,<sup>1</sup> Leo himself took too much interest in the debate to dream of burning the combatants. The commentary on the *de Anima*, of which part has been published by Professor L. Ferri, I have not seen; but there is an interesting account of it in A. H. Douglas's *Pietro Pomponazzi*.<sup>2</sup>

What I now propose to say of Pomponazzi's opinions will be concerned with those delivered in two of his books, the *De Immortalitate Animae* and the *De Naturalium Effectuum admirandorum Causis sive De Incantationibus*, published posthumously at Basle in 1567. From these may be derived a very tolerably clear impression of the position of one in whom, as has been said, the mediaeval synthesis is manifestly bankrupt, since the most extreme opposition reveals itself between the consequences drawn respectively from the two grand authorities of the Middle Ages, and no attempt is made to overcome it except by aid of the paradoxical doctrine of a double truth, an attempt, as we can scarcely help believing, undertaken by Pomponazzi not in good faith but in a spirit of irony.

In the treatise *de Immortalitate Animae* Pomponazzi contends that the doctrine of the mortality of the human soul is the proper consequence of the doctrine of Aristotle that it is the 'form' of the body. This doctrine had been maintained by St. Thomas, but conceived by him to be compatible with holding that the soul is immortal. He

<sup>1</sup> *Averroès*, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> This monograph was written as a degree thesis at Cambridge, and the author intended to expand it into a treatise on the whole movement to which Pomponazzi's speculations belong; but he died before he had accomplished his design. It was afterwards (1910) published at Cambridge, and (although it would have been improved by more careful editing) is the fullest and most important account of Pomponazzi that exists in English.

observes that Plato was right, since he held the immortality of the soul in describing man, not in Aristotle's fashion as a compound of soul and body, but rather as a soul using a body by way of instrument. Agreeing with St. Thomas that in man there is an actual union in one soul of an intellectual and a sensitive nature, Pomponazzi draws from it an opposite conclusion, not that this soul is properly immortal, but *secundum quid*—in respect of a particular element in it—mortal but rather that properly, as this individual soul it is mortal, although it may be loosely called immortal, because it differs from the souls of lower animals in including an element, the Intellect, which is itself in its own nature immortal and which, as existing elsewhere (that is, in the Intelligences that, according to the Aristotelian cosmology, move the heavenly bodies), is actually exempt from death. The human soul is regarded by Pomponazzi as midway between these Intelligences and the merely sensitive souls of brutes. To these last is necessary not merely a material body as its *object*—what the senses perceive is necessarily of corporeal nature—but also as its *subject*; since the power of sensation can only be exercised in and through a bodily organ, and their perceptions extend only to particular objects; of universals they have no knowledge. The Intelligences on the other hand, though they stand in a certain relation to what is corporeal, since they move the heavenly bodies, yet exercise their intellectual activity in complete independence of matter. What they know is not material, nor do they know by means of any material organ. They need a body neither as subject nor as object. Hence they are not properly called souls. That the human soul, so far as its intellect is concerned, does not need a body as its *subject*, is admitted, for thought or knowledge is not the function of a material organ, and the existence of the Intelligences shows that it can exist in a purely spiritual manner; but it needs a body



as its *object*. For the Aristotelian dictum that οὐκ ἔστι νοεῖν ἄνευ φαντάσματος<sup>1</sup> is true. All human thought is mediated through the imagination, and the content of the imagination plainly consists of *idola corporalia*, images of sensibly perceived bodies. The human mind can therefore only know the universal in the particular; nor can it ever entirely free itself from space and time. From this necessity of matter *tanquam objectum* to the human soul it follows that it cannot hold converse with immaterial beings; hence (as Aristotle had held) all stories of such intercourse, or of the apotheosis of human beings, must be considered fabulous, *a legibus confictum propter hominum utilitatem*. We shall return to this point in dealing with the other treatise of Pomponazzi which I propose to consider, the *De Incantationibus*. The conclusion of the present argument is that the intellect, as such, is indeed in nowise the actuality (*actus*, ἐντελέχεια) of an organized body, because the Intelligences need no organ for understanding, but only for moving. They move the heavenly bodies, but their thought is quite independent of these. But the human intellect so far forth as human is the *actus corporis organici*, the body being its object, and thus in one sense it has not an existence separate from body, although, inasmuch as it does not require body as its subject (that is, it does not use a bodily organ for thinking or knowing), it has in another sense such a separate existence, there being no real incompatibility between these two conditions, namely, dependence on the body as *object* and independence on it as *subject*. Hence for Pomponazzi the individual human soul is not separable from its body and perishes with it, and (as we should expect) he holds it to be propagated by natural descent and not, as was held in what had come to be considered the orthodox view, to be in every case a new creation. The thought of man's mixed nature as combining in himself the intellectual and the

<sup>1</sup> *de Memoria*, i. 449 b 31. Cp. *de Anima*, iii. 7. 431 a 17.

merely sensitive suggests to Pomponazzi an answer to the argument frequently alleged for human immortality from man's natural desire for it ; which like other genuinely natural desires must be supposed to be directed toward a really existing end. The mule (he remarks), though possessing organs of generation, cannot propagate its kind ; the mole, though possessing eyes, cannot see ; thus in these species nature seems to have produced some things incapable of realizing their ends, although within the genus animal, taken as a whole, these ends are realized ; for other animals propagate their kind, other animals see with their eyes, though these do not. Just in the same way man has an intellect which is in itself something that can be used apart from a body ; and the sphere-moving Intelligences can and do actually so use theirs, though man cannot so use his. Pomponazzi deals at length with certain objections to this doctrine of the soul's mortality, for, although he puts it forward as the doctrine required by the principles of Aristotle rather than as his own, and professes from the outset for his personal part a dutiful submission to the authority of the Church, yet there is scarcely any real attempt to disguise his own agreement with it. The first objection is that, if man is not immortal he will not attain the *felicitas* which is universally acknowledged to be the end and purpose of his being ; and thus he will be worse off than the beasts, whose end, though a meaner kind of satisfaction than that at which man aims, is at any rate attainable and attained. To this Pomponazzi replies that the end of man is to be found in moral or practical excellence, in which he can attain perfection, not in speculative or productive, in which he cannot. There are things he cannot know, things he cannot produce. But moral virtue — ' the good will ', as Kant would say — is within his reach. Aristotle had recognized that all the happiness for which man, being man, could hope, was not a happiness wholly

exempt from vicissitude.<sup>1</sup> Yet no man would rather be a beast than a man ; even the least measure of knowledge and virtue is preferable to all carnal pleasures. We are reminded of the famous passage of Mill's *Utilitarianism*<sup>2</sup> in which he says that one would rather be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied. The second objection taken is : On what grounds other than that of the hope of immortality does a man, for example, face death for his country ? St. Thomas had said<sup>3</sup> that but for the hope of resurrection it would seem more reasonable to commit any crime than face death. Pomponazzi will not admit that virtue is not preferable to vice in any case, and tries to give St. Thomas's words another interpretation. If they meant what they are alleged as meaning, they would be *neque sapienter neque theologicè dicta*. Death is a less evil than disgrace, and whatever may happen to us after death we ought in no case to desert the way of virtue. Even animals (who of course were commonly held not to have immortal souls) will sometimes sacrifice themselves for the community. Bees, for example, will sacrifice themselves for the hive. The third objection is that to deny that virtue meets with its reward in another life is to impugn either the sovereign power or the goodness of God. But, says Pomponazzi, virtue is its own reward. *Praemium essenziale virtutis est ipsamet virtus, quae hominem felicem facit*. The addition of accidental or external reward would even tend to diminish this 'essential' reward ; for virtuous actions done with the hope of reward are less virtuous than those whose motive is purely disinterested, and thus the former kind meet with less 'essential reward', this 'essential reward' being no other than their virtuousness. To the fourth objection that all religions—he uses the usual mediaeval word *leges*—teach the doctrine of immortality (he has in view of course Christianity, Judaism,

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic. i. 10. 1101a 5 ff.*

<sup>2</sup> p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Opusc. vi, de Apost. Symb.*

and Mohammedanism), he replies that they do so, and justifiably, since thus only could the baser sort be persuaded to act rightly ; but that this does not involve the speculative truth of the doctrine. The legislator cares not about teaching truth but only about promoting upright conduct ; nor, as a statesman, is he to be blamed—*neque accusandus ut politicus*. On the fifth objection, from ghost stories, Pomponazzi observes that many are not true ; some are due to priestly imposture ; while apparitions and dreams, which are used to prove the posthumous existence of those who appear in them, are to be ascribed only to ‘ God and the Intelligences ’—that is, as usual, the sphere-moving spirits of the Aristotelian cosmogony. This is the theme of Pomponazzi’s later work, *de Incantationibus*, of which I shall say something hereafter. The similar sixth objection, from the express testimony of *daemones* that they are the spirits of the dead, he dismisses on similar grounds. The prophecies of those who are called *daemoniaci*—the possessed—are not to be attributed to such beings as are supposed to speak through them. They are due to impressions from the heavenly bodies. If it be thought inconsistent with this origin that they sometimes prophesy falsely—a difficulty in Pomponazzi’s system, in which the influences of the heavenly bodies take the place held in naturalism of a more modern type by the uniform laws of nature, and so could not be supposed to give false indications—he observes that want of skill or understanding, or even wilfulness, may explain the occurrence of erroneous reports of the meaning of the impressions made upon the souls of the possessed persons. The seventh objection is from the authority of Aristotle. But Pomponazzi has no difficulty here. In the passages quoted Aristotle is merely using popular language and not expressing his own scientific convictions. Pomponazzi is unquestionably right here. The eighth and last objection is one which has often played a part in this con-

troversy : namely, that the deniers of immortality have ever been bad men, while men of notable goodness have usually asserted it. Pomponazzi has here again little difficulty in producing contrary instances to both these generalizations. And now, his argument completed, we are suddenly startled by the appearance of the surely ironical submission to the teaching of the Church by which Pomponazzi ever seeks to evade the heresy-hunters around him. 'That the soul is immortal is an article of faith and therefore it should be proved by the means proper to faith, by arguments based on faith and revelation and canonical Scripture.' Perhaps no one was ever deceived by this into supposing Pomponazzi's own view to be other than that which he has so ably defended in the body of the treatise ; but it allowed him to make the defence which he states in his *Apology* against his critics, that those who said his book was heretical showed themselves ignorant of what heresy is ; that he has only affirmed the belief of Aristotle in the mortality of the soul, and in doing this has a number of Church Fathers and other reputable authors on his side ; that for himself he has duly submitted himself to the judgement of the Apostolic See. No reasoning on natural principles can prove the immortality of the soul ; it must be held by faith alone. We are reminded of the conclusion of Hume's *Essay on Miracles*. The two philosophers doubtless regarded in much the same way the relation between their respectful bow to faith and their genuine convictions.

Four years later, in 1520, after the controversy roused by the treatise *de Immortalitate Animae* had spent its first force without having involved the ruin of its audacious author, he composed another work of especial interest to students of natural theology in the form of a letter to a friend, a physician of Mantua, which was not however published until 1567, long after the author's death, and then not in Italy, but at Basle. This book, often quoted by its shorter title *De*



*Incantationibus*, is better described by its longer, *De Naturalium Effectuum admirandorum Causis*, and is in the main directed against the explanation of miraculous cures, visions, and the like phenomena by the agency of spiritual beings, demons or angels. I will give some account of the contents of this work, so far as they are of interest to us in our present study.

He begins by observing that, although the three *leges* or positive religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, all admit the agency of demons, Aristotle does not. Here again, therefore, as in the treatise *de Immortalitate*, his thesis is not explicitly the defence of an opinion as his own, but the defence of it as being Aristotle's. This leaves it open to him to profess at the end his acceptance of the teaching of his own *lex*. He takes occasion by a curious case, of the healing by words and charms of certain children, one suffering from erysipelas, one from a burn, another from a piece of iron which had stuck in its body and could not by ordinary means be extracted, to contend that it is absurd to seek an explanation of such phenomena in occult causes, unlike any of which we have positive evidence, *immanifesta quae nulla verisimilitudine persuaderi possunt*, instead of trying to find natural causes. This is a principle—that of seeking a *vera causa*—which is put forward by Newton,<sup>1</sup> and now finds a place in most treatises on what is called 'inductive logic' as a rule of investigation. Incidentally he refers to an opinion of Avicenna's<sup>2</sup> that all natural things obey an understanding well disposed and raised above matter. I have already mentioned<sup>3</sup> the repudiation by St. Thomas Aquinas of this view, which closely resembles a favourite notion of modern apologists for Scriptural miracles, that elevation of moral character might be expected to bring with it a control of the natural world. Pomponazzi observes

<sup>1</sup> *Principia* iii, Regula 1. *Causas rerum naturalium non plures admitti debere quam quae et verae sint et eorum phenomenis explicandis sufficient.*

<sup>2</sup> *de Anima*, iv. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Above, p. 230.

that this opinion of Avicenna's, though condemned by the Church, might perhaps be reconciled with Aristotle. For there would be nothing to prevent our seeing in this disposition of the understanding an effect induced by the heavenly bodies. He is quite willing to admit that mind may sometimes exercise a remarkable influence over matter ; but such occurrences are no proofs of the agency of angels, departed saints, or demons. The supposition that the persons who work such wonders must be holy men, or else in league with devils, is unnecessary. Many such have been, as a matter of fact, bad men, while others who have been accused of complicity with evil spirits agreed with Aristotle in denying that such exist. He is quite aware of the danger to religious traditions which might be scented in his abandonment of a supernatural explanation of wonderful phenomena. It will, he sees, be asked at once why magic should be condemned, if the cures worked by it are wholly natural ? Will not natural causes suffice for the stigmata of St. Francis or of St. Catherine of Siena ? May they not be counted among the physical effects wrought by strong imagination and assimilated to those—then generally believed—by which the imaginations of pregnant women were supposed to effect their offspring ? Nay, might not even the Biblical miracles, the foundation of the Jewish and Christian religions, be found susceptible of similar explanation ? Pomponazzi deals with these objections in his usual way, which we have no choice but to regard as ironical. Even though we find facts recorded in the Old or New Testament which are capable of a natural explanation, we must still believe them to have been true miracles if competent authority states that they were so. The judgement of the Church must be in every case accepted as to whether an occurrence is miraculous or no. But if our question be (as Pomponazzi always represents his as being) concerning what accords with the principles of Aristotelian philosophy, then we shall have to deny the

existence of any spiritual beings between God and man, except the sphere-moving Intelligences. These are the only good spirits, and there are no evil spirits. And to God and these Intelligences the Peripatetic can ascribe all that the positive religions put down to angels and devils. Now we must not here be misled by appearances. At first sight it might seem to us that a thinker who has admitted the existence of the Aristotelian sphere-spirits cannot be treated as a genuine supporter of Naturalism ; if once one has admitted such beings at all, it is (one may think) a question of no general interest how many such there may be. There can be no difference of principle between admitting the sphere-spirits and admitting angels ; we remember, indeed, that by Dante these two kinds of mythological beings had been identified. But we must remember that to Pomponazzi there was a whole world of difference between his position and that of the believers in angels and devils. These last were supposed to be directly active in human affairs, quite independently of the necessary laws of nature. But the sphere-moving intelligences were simply (with God) the ultimate sources of the energy manifested in all natural processes. The effects which others attributed to angels or devils might indeed be attributed to them ; but they must by no means be held, like angels or the devils of ecclesiastical legend, to intervene directly in human affairs. The Intelligences only acted on men *mediantibus coelis*, and through the ordinary course of nature, within which all effects due to them were thus included.

But, so long as the sole agency recognized in phenomena is this universal agency of God and the Intelligences, Pomponazzi is ready to accept any number of 'occult properties'. Why scammony should be a purgative we cannot say ; such is its nature ; and it might quite as well be the nature of the crow to portend evil, of the turtle-dove to portend good. There is no need to introduce *daemones* of any kind.

The course of individual lives is doubtless determined by the circumstances of their birth in respect of the heavenly bodies ; but we need not personify these good and bad genitures ' as personal genii presiding over each individual '. Yet such personification may have its uses in the instruction of those whose intelligence is not matured ; and Averroes<sup>1</sup> was right in comparing the language of the *leges*, the positive religions, to that of the poets. Both Plato and Aristotle allow the use of mythology to draw men from the knowledge of sensible things to that of things of higher immaterial nature, though in philosophizing Aristotle rejects the method of ' riddles, metaphors, and fictions ' which Plato had affected. Indeed, according to Albertus Magnus,<sup>2</sup> he wrote a work addressed to his pupil Alexander the Great, *On the Death of the Soul*, against ' Gods, Religions, and Priests ', the disappearance of which Pomponazzi is disposed to attribute either to the heathen or to the Christian priesthood. Reported miracles and visions give Pomponazzi no trouble : the former are explained by faith (a dog's relics, if taken for a saint's, will be as effective in working them) ; while the form of the latter, it is noted, is always conditioned by the religious creed of the seer, as Averroes had already explained the matter.<sup>3</sup> The same providence which makes one man to be of one nation, another of another, has disposed the imagination of each accordingly. The difficulty presenting itself of the existence of evil in a world thus determined throughout by God, Pomponazzi does not shrink from asserting that, ' God, the Intelligences, the

<sup>1</sup> *Paraphrasis in Arist. Poetic. c. 6* (ed. Ven., 1574, ii. 223 A).

<sup>2</sup> *De libris licitis et illicitis*, c. 10. Albert does not say, as Pomponazzi seems to have understood him, that this book taught the mortality of the soul, but that it is called *The Death of the Soul*, presumably as itself mortal to the soul because of the unlawful magic taught in it. *Sed qui omnium pessimus inventus est liber quem scripsit Aristoteles Alexandro regi qui sic incipit : Dixit Arist. Alex. regi : Si vis percipere, etc. Hic est liber quem quidam vocant mortem animae* (*Opp.* t. v, p. 661).

<sup>3</sup> *In Arist. de Divinatione per Somnum* (ed. Ven. 1574, vi. (2), p. 36 E).



heavenly bodies', that is, the universal system (Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura*), is the cause of them. Every species of finite being exhibits some imperfection, some defect of being (we are again reminded of Spinoza here); yet no one hesitates to call God the creator of every such species, whereas defects within a species (defective individuals) some are unwilling to attribute to God. They are *peccata naturae*, flawed specimens as it were, not designed but due to some failure in the plastic process initiated by God. But for Pomponazzi the fact that astrologers can predict famines and prodigies sufficiently shows that even here we have still to do with determinate effects of the motions of the heavenly bodies, and therefore, according to his philosophy, of 'God and the Intelligences', to whose energy these motions are themselves traceable, and which only operate through the medium of those motions. The evils so caused are, however, *mala naturae* not *mala culpae*. As to these last Pomponazzi distinguishes. If a man be physically disposed 'by the gods and the heavenly bodies' to some act reckoned morally blameworthy, whether he sin or no by committing it, the result is in either case good as an event, though, if he sin, it is bad for him. Similarly, the putting to death of Socrates was bad for his murderers, good for him; indeed the philosopher Aristippus wished that he might have such a death for himself. That this theory amounts to saying that we are compelled to sin, Pomponazzi does not admit. If the reason is not bound it cannot be compelled; the act is a free act, taking its place in the universal order, as we saw above, equally well in either event; if, on the other hand, the reason is bound, the man is not his own master, and his act is no more sinful than a brute's would be.

These reflections, while not uninteresting, are also perhaps not out of the way. But we must now consider a remarkable doctrine of Pomponazzi's, that of the horoscope of religions.



Let us first take it as stated by Pomponazzi. 'All that's born must die.' This is a principle guaranteed both by Platonic and by Aristotelian authority. This must apply to religions. The change from one religion to another is so difficult a thing, that it must ever, if it is to be accomplished, be accompanied by new and surprising wonders, while the religion whose term is coming to an end will find its miraculous power waning. The failure of the ancient oracles at the beginning of the Christian era and the wonders wrought by the first preachers of Christianity illustrate this law. Miracle-workers appear, produced by the operations of 'the heavenly bodies' (that is by the power of nature) whenever in the regular course of the universe a religious revolution is due. The powers usually 'dispersed in herbs, stones, and animals whether rational or irrational' are focused, as it were, in these personages, 'by gift of God and the Intelligences', so that they are regarded with reverence as 'sons of God'. Nor do such sons of God stand alone. Many others appear in their company who receive the like divine nature either from the primary recipient (as a magnetized piece of iron will magnetize others) or directly from the like influence acting upon themselves; by these the work begun by the founder of the new religion is carried on and completed. Like all other things which are subject to the law of birth and death, religions have their periods of growth, of maturity, of decay.

During the first period 'the heavens' fight against the enemies of the missionaries of the new faith; but after maturity is reached, decline always sets in, though it may be more rapid and therefore more quickly obvious in some cases than in others. Hence religion has its fashions (always, of course, determined by the heavenly bodies) just as have civil societies. In these latter the flags or standards are changed from time to time, so in religion the Cross was once dishonorable, while now there is nothing more venerable;

it is just the other way round with the name of Jupiter. The Cross can do nothing of itself, but only in so far forth as it is the symbol of the Lawgiver, *quem tantum curant nunc sidera*, whom the constellations now favour so highly. But Christianity itself has now manifestly entered on its period of decline. 'Nowadays in our religion all things are growing old, genuine miracles are ceasing, only sham ones remain; we see that its end is nigh at hand.' The course of the world is for Pomponazzi, as for his master Aristotle and for Aristotle's own master Plato, cyclical. The forms of worship which now are have, so far as their kind goes, *secundum speciem*, existed an infinite number of times already, and will exist an infinite number of times hereafter. This vicissitude is perpetual and eternal, and so must have a cause which is eternal, and this can be no other than the trinity to which he perpetually recurs, 'the heavenly bodies, God, and the Intelligences'. All positive religions are placed by this theory upon the same footing. 'If a man will consider the religion of Moses, the religion of the Gentiles, the religion of Mohammed, under every single religion the same kind of miracles were wrought as are recorded and related as having been wrought under the religion of Christ.' 'According to the various religions,' he says, 'God sends angels in bodily form because, as Dionysius says,<sup>1</sup> the human understanding cannot be otherwise instructed (concerning divine things) save through these veils.' This sudden allegation in favour of his doctrine of the grand source of orthodox Christian angelology, himself indeed, as Pomponazzi elsewhere notes, 'a great Aristotelian', is noticeable. But although the followers of Aristotle's philosophy and the positive religions agree in teaching that miraculous phenomena are wrought by real incorporeal beings, yet they differ in this respect, that the Aristotelians teach that they are wrought by the Intelligences which move the heavenly

<sup>1</sup> *de Cael. Hier.* i. § 2.

bodies, and by means of the heavenly bodies themselves, while the positive religions teach that they are the work of angels and demons, directly and not through the medium of the heavenly bodies.' Pomponazzi wonders, however, why such supposed beings should be invoked to do what the Intelligences, acting through the heavenly bodies, could do quite as well 'since we plainly see that the universe is governed by them'. Not only, moreover, does the philosophy of Aristotle admit no purely spiritual beings, except God and the Intelligences, but, God being unchangeable, a direct intervention of God is inconsistent with its principles. For the same reason it excludes the creation by God of a new soul for every human body. After the uncompromising naturalism of this account of the history of religion, we shall not be misled by as many as seven pages of profession that, even as respects the agency of angels and demons, he submits to the authority of the Church, into supposing Pomponazzi to be in earnest with any other view than that which he has stated in the body of his book.

We must not suppose that Pomponazzi originated the conception of a horoscope of religions, although perhaps no one else has so unshrinkingly applied it. In the treatise *de Legibus*<sup>1</sup> (that is, of course, *On Positive Religions*) written by William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris, who died A.D. 1249, we already hear of some who attribute the 'diversity of religions, no less than other differences and conditions of men, to the heavens and the stars'. These, we are told, ascribed the origin of the Hebrew religion to the planet Saturn, whose day, Saturday, it keeps holy. The misfortunes of the Jewish nation, the frequency of the prophetic gift among them, their characteristic vices of avarice, obstinacy, and cruelty, were all put down to the influence of their presiding planet. The religion of the Saracens, that is Mohammedanism, was similarly by these

<sup>1</sup> c. 20.

persons supposed to exhibit the influence of Venus. Friday, the *dies Veneris*, is their weekly day of worship, while indulgence in sexual pleasures is their characteristic vice. To Christianity the sun (whose day it keeps holy) was assigned as its protecting luminary, while its relationship to Judaism explained such facts as the establishment of the supreme pontiffs in Italy (the *Saturnia regna* of the ancients), and the use by them of a leaden seal, lead being the metal especially associated with Saturn. The origin of the various heretical sects was explained in like manner as due to planetary conjunctions and the like. William of Auvergne undertakes to refute these views ; but what now concerns us is the fact that they were put forward. They found acceptance with Roger Bacon, who was always disposed to credit astrological fancies, and thinks that *mathe-matica*, the art of divining by the stars, may be used as a guide in the choice of a religion. There are seven sects, corresponding to the seven planets ; in his scheme, however, Christianity is assigned to Mercury ; for Mercury is the presiding genius of wisdom and eloquence, his house is the sign of Virgo, and the great ' prophet ' of the Christian religion was born of a Virgin. As in the astrological speculations mentioned by William of Auvergne, Judaism is placed under the patronage of Saturn, Mohammedanism of Venus ; of the Chaldean religion the patron planet is Mars, of the Egyptian the sun ; for the moon is reserved the future sect of Antichrist.<sup>1</sup> Roger Bacon is convinced that by a proper use of astrological science the date of the downfall of Mohammedanism could be ascertained. In view of these passages of William of Auvergne and Roger Bacon, it is plain that Renan<sup>2</sup> is mistaken in saying that the notion of the horoscope of religions originated in 1303<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. Tert.* c. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Averroès et Averroïsme*, p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> This date is given in the immediate context of the passage shortly to be quoted, as that at which it was written.

with Peter of Abano. This person is reckoned by Renan as the founder of the Paduan Averroism. He was a physician as well as a philosopher, and celebrated as the author of a book called *Conciliator differentiarum Philosophorum et Medicorum*, whence he is often quoted (for example by Pomponazzi himself) simply as *Conciliator*. He mentions here<sup>1</sup> that when a conjunction of the planets Saturn and Jupiter takes place in the sign of the Ram, which happens at intervals of about 960 years, not only is human nature changed in respect of strength or weakness, longevity or the opposite, but the whole lower world is altered, and so not only new empires but new religions and prophets arise, as happened at the appearance of Nebuchadnezzar, of Moses, of Alexander the Great, of the Nazarene,<sup>2</sup> of Mohammed.<sup>3</sup> The *Conciliator* was in his time suspected both of magic and of heresy. Once acquitted on the latter charge by the Inquisition, he was again accused, but died while the trial was proceeding. His body was sentenced to be burned, but was not found; it had, it is said, been removed by a woman who lived with him; and the Inquisition was reduced to burning him in effigy. Pico della Mirandola, the brilliant contemporary of Pomponazzi,<sup>4</sup> was better informed than Renan.<sup>5</sup> He mentions<sup>6</sup> the passage in Roger Bacon, and finds the first author of the

<sup>1</sup> *Diff.* ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Nazareni*. The mention of Christ by this name is to be noted. One would have been inclined to conjecture that Peter was merely reproducing Albumasar, but the Venetian edition of the *Great Conjunctions* (1515) has 'Jesus filius Mariae super quem fiunt orationes', and this is confirmed by a reference in the part of Roger Bacon's *Opus Tertium* newly printed by Mr. Little (Aberdeen, 1912), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> The chronology is not without its difficulties, but these do not now concern us.

<sup>4</sup> He was younger than Pomponazzi by a year, but died long before him, in 1494, at the early age of thirty-one.

<sup>5</sup> *Averroës*, p. 326. Renan speaks as though Pico had *adopted* the theory of the horoscope of religions, instead of devoting one of his ten books against astrology to its refutation.

<sup>6</sup> *Adversus astrologos*, ii. 5.



notion in the ninth century Arabian astronomer Albumasar, to whom Roger Bacon himself refers.<sup>1</sup>

Albumasar, in his book *de Magnis Conjunctionibus*,<sup>2</sup> tells us that on the conjunction of Jupiter (who signifies religious faith) with different planets depends the predominance of one or other positive religion. Thus when Jupiter is in conjunction with Saturn we find Judaism predominant, when with the Sun, idolatrous sun-worship, when with Venus, 'the pure faith of the divine unity', that is Mohammedanism or some system of the sort; when with Mercury, the Christian religion or some other gloomy and exacting faith<sup>3</sup>; when with the Moon, we have an age of doubt and unbelief. This arrangement, which Roger Bacon follows, is different in some respects from that combated by William of Auvergne. Albumasar fixed<sup>4</sup> 1460 years as the term allowed to Christianity, a term already, as Pico observes,<sup>5</sup> exceeded when he was writing in 1494. To Albumasar Roger Bacon refers the statement about the calculation of the dates of Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Christ, and Mahomet which Renan supposed original in Peter of Abano. Roger Bacon, more reverent than Peter of Abano, speaks of 'the Lord Christ'.<sup>6</sup>

The horoscope of religions is found also in the famous astrologer and physician Cardan in the next generation to Pomponazzi.<sup>7</sup> Saturn is the star of the Jews, Jupiter and Mercury in conjunction that of the Christians. Again, nearly a hundred years later than Pomponazzi, one who delighted to call himself a disciple of the Paduan philosopher, Vanini,—

<sup>1</sup> *Op. Maj.* i. 189.

<sup>2</sup> i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *in qua fuerit occultatio et gravitas et labor.*

<sup>4</sup> *de Magnis Conjunctionibus*, ii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *adv. Astrologos*, v. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Cecco of Ascoli, who cast the horoscope of Christ, was burned by the Inquisition at Florence in 1327; see Lea *Hist. of the Inqu.* iii. 441 ff. But, nearly two centuries earlier, Bernard Silvester had included the birth of Christ among events fatally determined and written in the stars (*de Universitate Mundi* iii. 53, 54; ed. Barach & Wrobel, p. 16).

<sup>7</sup> *de Suppl. Almanach*, c. 22.

he was executed for atheism at Toulouse in 1618—criticized in detail in his *Amphitheatrum* the astrological speculations of Cardan on this subject, including by the way his discovery of the cause of the Anglican schism in the conjunction of Mars and Mercury in Aries.<sup>1</sup>

In dealing with this theory of the horoscope of religions we must distinguish, as in respect of Pomponazzi's naturalism as a whole, between the form and the substance. The whole atmosphere of astrology is remote from us, but this should not prevent us from recognizing that the issue really at stake between Pomponazzi and his contemporary opponents was one very familiar to us to-day—the issue of the possibility of accounting for the history of mankind and what it calls its spiritual experience on purely naturalistic principles. If the natural science of Pomponazzi seems out of date, his tendency to emphasize the subjectivity of religious experience is very much in harmony with the fashions of to-day. Again, it may very naturally occur to the reader that after all the naturalism of Pomponazzi was less thoroughly materialistic than that which we know best, because in tracing the whole course of the world to 'God and the Intelligences' it was really tracing all to a spiritual and not to a material cause. But though no doubt this is true, and must be taken into account in attempting to reconstruct in imagination the outlook of Pomponazzi himself, yet we must recollect that by his adoption of the 'cyclical' theory of the world process, taken together with his denial of individual immortality, he seems to empty that process of any such significance as it might possess if regarded as an evolution, in the course of which what is new is continually being produced. No doubt he would in some respects have sympathized with a view of the type of that so brilliantly defended of late by Mr. Bosanquet in his Gifford Lectures. He would have

<sup>1</sup> ed. Lugd. 1615, p. 64.

recognized a high spiritual value in the virtue of the souls produced in each epoch, although these souls must perish; nor, we may suppose him to say, is this value in any way decreased by the fact that duplicates of these virtuous souls have existed an infinite number of times before at intervals of some 'great year', and that an infinite number of such will exist hereafter at like intervals. But the room thus given in his system for a recognition of spiritual value has nothing in particular to do with his view of the motions of the heavens as originated by God and the Intelligences. Most modern writers who oppose Naturalism in the interests of religion would concede to Pomponazzi a great part of his contention. They admit in all religious tradition a large element of subjectivity, whether racial, national, or individual; they attempt to view the religious history of the human race as one, and they often have no desire to isolate it from the general world process, but rather to recognize it as one of its most important features. But the real incompatibility of Pomponazzi's view with a genuine religious consciousness will be found to lie in his denial of any immediate intercourse of the soul with God except *mediantibus coelis*. Perhaps even of this we may say that the champions of religion have often been too unwilling to recognize a truth in what his insistence on this phrase expresses; too unwilling, despite their familiarity with the notion of a sacramental communion with the divine, to recognize the universal mediation in the soul's intercourse with God of the body and the physical universe of which the body forms a part. Yet if they are to recognize this, without abandonment of what is essential to a recognition of religious experience as no mere illusion, it must be by the help of a notion of God's action upon the soul as being, however mediated, a real meeting of spirit with spirit. They cannot be content with a God like Pomponazzi's, who,

though in himself spiritual, is in relation to us merely the first mover of the material heavens. This last conception of God is, as Pomponazzi himself would have been forward to assert, not his but Aristotle's. In Pomponazzi's doctrine is revealed the failure of the efforts of the earlier Schoolmen to serve two masters. The Aristotelian philosophy could not really admit within its four corners the God of St. Paul who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ;<sup>1</sup> and a Christian, or indeed a religious conception of God, must either let itself be convicted of incompatibility with philosophy, or else protest that philosophy and Aristotle are not interchangeable terms. Pomponazzi had yet seven years to live—and had not written his book *de Incantationibus*—when Luther affixed his famous theses to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenburg. To Luther Aristotle's theology was fundamentally unchristian, and the Ritschlian theologians appeal to Luther for support of their objection to all ' Rational Theology ' of the type which developed in the western schools under Aristotelian influence and to which their later master Kant—we need not here inquire with how much justification—supposed himself to have dealt in his *Critique of Pure Reason* a fatal blow.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

## VII

### LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY

THE last writer on natural theology of whom I propose to speak is Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1633), the elder brother of the poet George Herbert, and usually reckoned as the father of Deism, or at least of English Deism. I have, however, no intention of describing with any pretence of exhaustiveness the life and works of one whose own Autobiography (concerned, it is true, more with his love adventures and his duels, than with his philosophical and theological studies) is easily accessible, and of whom many good modern accounts are ready to hand for every English reader. The affinities of this Natural Theology are rather with that of the period with which the first part of Professor Pfléiderer's *History of the Philosophy of Religion* is concerned, than with that of the Middle Ages;<sup>1</sup> and I shall content myself with some observations upon the relation which his views bear to that of the mediaeval thinkers with whom we have already dealt.

The accepted meaning of 'deism' is belief in a God known by the light of nature apart from revelation. In this sense the word seems to have arisen by the middle of the sixteenth century, when the Swiss Reformer Viret, the colleague of Calvin at Geneva, speaks of 'deist' as a name *tout nouveau lequel ils veulent opposer à Athéiste*, assumed by a group of persons holding opinions of the kind.<sup>2</sup> 'Deists' would, of course, be disposed to seek for the religion of nature in the element common to the positive religions known to them, and thus would carry on the tradition of those who,

<sup>1</sup> Which may indeed be said by his time to have come to an end.

<sup>2</sup> *Instruction Chrestienne*, ii, Epistre aux Fidèles.



like Pomponazzi, could look upon these differences between the positive religions as of no great moment. Yet in passing from Pomponazzi to Lord Herbert, who was born about half a century after the death of the Paduan free thinker, one feels that one has passed into a different atmosphere. No doubt one must not overlook that this is in part due to the very different temper and social situation of the two men. The contrast between Pomponazzi and Herbert's contemporary Vanini, who professed himself Pomponazzi's disciple, might not appear so great; while between Sir Thomas More, who was a younger contemporary of Pomponazzi, and More's countryman Herbert, there would have been a less contrast than between the latter and Pomponazzi. But when all such allowances are made, there still remains in the differences between Pomponazzi and Herbert a considerable element which is significant not only of their several idiosyncrasies, but of changes in the general outlook, wrought during the century that lay between the maturity of the one and that of the other, and in particular of the great religious and political movement of that century to which we give the name of the Reformation.

To Pomponazzi it seemed that he was witnessing the fatal decline of the religion which had prevailed in Europe for more than a thousand years. What was to succeed it he was ignorant; if he had made any guesses, he did not, so far as I know, give us any hint of their nature. The general tone of his discussion suggests that he probably expected some other system to arise substantially neither better nor worse than its predecessors; no more possessed of genuine truth, no less favoured by the all-ruling stars. This attitude was not unnatural in the Italy of that day. There was much to suggest that Christianity was in its decadence. Unbelief was found in the highest places of the Church. Pomponazzi's patron, Cardinal Bembo, was

(as we have seen) suspected of having little more faith than Pomponazzi himself in the doctrines of the Church of which he was a prince ; and Pope Leo X, though he was not personally an unbeliever, and though he probably did not utter the saying attributed to him ' Let us enjoy the papacy since God has given it to us ', was certainly not one in whose attitude to life there was anything to testify to an undiminished vitality in the religious system of which he was the official head. But there was little to suggest that Christianity was not, at least as the public religion of Europe, bound up with the hierarchy whose head and centre was at Rome. The papacy had in the immediately preceding age showed itself stronger than any council. If the new learning threatened the old beliefs, it may not have seemed fraught with any special danger to an institution which was profoundly penetrated by its spirit, and to some of whose most prominent representatives the old beliefs themselves were little more than a profitable superstition. Pomponazzi, as we saw, lived to see the beginnings of the Lutheran revolt. But he may have thought of it, much as Leo X himself did at first, as a ' quarrel of friars ', of little interest to a philosophic ' spectator of all time and all existence '. Between Pomponazzi and Lord Herbert the Reformation and the consequent disruption of the ecclesiastical unity of western Europe had taken place ; and the Counter Reformation had purged of neo-paganism in high places the Church which had not accepted the first Reformation. It had been found possible, not only for private Christians but for national churches, to dissociate their Christianity from the papal hierarchy and to combine an emphatic rejection of certain parts of the ecclesiastical tradition with a new emphasis on others.

Purification, simplification of religion, had gone far ; might it not, thought some, go farther ? The spirit which animates Herbert is hopeful and forward-looking, in strong

contrast with the pessimism and irony which characterize Pomponazzi; and if his philosophy of religion may be called naturalistic in virtue of its insistence on the ability of natural reason to dispense with revelation, its naturalism has little in common with the astrological fatalism of Pomponazzi. In his treatise *de Religione Gentilium* (which may be called a pioneer work on 'comparative religion') he dwells indeed on the antiquity of star-worship 'Although the worship of the Supreme God is more antient in itself, being written in the Heart, yet in regard our ancestors received the first indications of Him from those splendid incorruptible Bodies, the Sun and Moon, if not the most antient, yet certainly the most universal worship (such as it was) was paid to the Stars: as is evident from many authors; till at last by degrees they came to adore the Supreme Deity. For the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God shining in his works and he being best manifested to us by them, they could not come to the knowledge of Him in any other way. Men in the First Ages (by the Dictates of Conscience) in hopes of a better life, as the effect of Divine Worship and Love, were carried from thence to the Stars, the most illustrious work of the Supreme God, and so worshipped God himself in his works. Neither was there any other Form of Religion at that time.'<sup>1</sup> But the ceremonial worship of the Stars along with God as his chief ministers Herbert regards as a corruption, though the oldest corruption, of religion. He is an uncompromising defender of the doctrine that the human will is free<sup>2</sup> and is very much in earnest with the doctrine of a particular providence. Sir Sidney Lee, in the introduction to his edition of Lord Herbert's *Autobiography*, says that it is inconsistent in Herbert, while rejecting public revelation, to admit personal and private revelations; and he has not been the first to find the famous sign of divine approval which Herbert believed himself to have received

<sup>1</sup> pp. 6, 7, Eng. tr., 1705, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *de Veritate*, ed. 1633, p. 84.

on the completion of his treatise *de Veritate* incongruous with the negative attitude towards revelation which is taken up in the book itself. But this criticism may be said to show a lack of genuine insight into Herbert's position. There is nothing inconsistent in holding that the external authority of the record of a revelation can add nothing to the testimony of natural reason, and yet in recognizing that to an individual such a personal experience as Herbert has recorded of himself may add something to it. The immediate impression made by such an experience upon the soul enables it to rank with the 'innate ideas' or 'common notions' which one cannot doubt, indeed, but to which we may not attend. It is a frequent practice to label deism as a belief in a merely 'transcendent' God: but it is not, by any means, a fair description to give of it, if we mean by it to suggest that all deists deny (as Aristotle did) the possibility of direct communion between the soul and God. Lord Herbert I take to have believed very decidedly in this possibility; it was just because he believed so decidedly in it that 'the hearing of the ear', the acceptance at second hand of other people's experiences, seemed unnecessary to him. The essentials of religion were written in the heart of every man; and every man might himself be the recipient of special communications. There was involved in this rejection of the mediation of traditions and revelations, an insufficient appreciation of the dependence of the individual on social inheritance and environment, but not, I think, an insufficient recognition of the nearness of God to the individual soul.

It belongs to the hopefulness and forward-looking spirit of Lord Herbert that with him Natural Religion is clearly recognized not merely as an identical element detected in the various positive religions, but as capable of standing by itself as a religion by the side of them. It is interesting to note stages on the way to this point of view. Cardinal

Nicholas of Cusa<sup>1</sup> had attempted in his book *de Pace Fidei* to sketch a universal religion. *Una est religio*, he said, *omnium intellectu vigentium*; a remarkable phrase, in which (as Professor J. A. Smith has observed in a paper read to the Historical Congress recently held in London) one may perhaps see the original of the familiar 'Sensible men are all of the same religion', which Disraeli puts into the mouth of Waldershare in *Endymion*. The universal religion, however, which Cusanus represents as the result of a quaintly conceived conference of representatives of the chief existing faiths, rapt into heaven for the purpose and assembled there under the presidency of the Divine Word, is what we may call a liberal Christianity, quite decidedly Christian, with the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation as integral parts of it, although with a considerable latitude of opinion allowed upon a number of subsidiary points. Sir Thomas More's Utopian religion is a nearer approach to the ideal of Herbert. It is a self-subsisting religion of its own by the side of positive religions like Christianity, and like Herbert's it has for its cardinal points the existence of God, the acceptableness of virtue, and the immortality of the soul, deniers of which last article are, though not punished, yet disfranchised. But it is sketched less as a contribution to the philosophy of religion as it actually existed than in a spirit of satirical contrast with the present and of untrammelled speculation on what might be under quite different conditions. It required the experience of the political success of the Reformation<sup>2</sup> to bring the establishment of a yet more simplified form of religion within the range of practical politics. I do not

<sup>1</sup> Who may be said to have introduced into philosophy the use of the expression 'the Absolute' in the sense now most familiar.

<sup>2</sup> With which indeed in the form which it took in fact More, as is well known, had so little sympathy that he died a martyr to the mediaeval principle of a Catholic Church organized as a single polity transcending distinctions of nationality.



say that Herbert himself can be said to have entertained any expectation of seeing such an establishment effected. He himself conformed to the Church of England, and made no especial attempt at reforming it further. But still it is true that the whole tone of his discussion of the essential elements in religion is different from that of those who had seen no successful attempt to strip it of elements which were not essential but had accumulated about it in the course of ages, and which seemed to be bound up with it as a historical institution. For Herbert, as for many since his time, the belief of the Protestant Reformers that Christianity had been perverted from its original purity and simplicity through the multiplication by an interested priesthood of traditions calculated to exalt their own dignity and increase their influence, was generalized into a theory of the corruption of primitive religion by priests. We shall see this theory constantly recurring in his writings.

In 1629 Herbert published at Paris the first edition of his treatise *de Veritate prout distinguitur a Revelatione, Verisimili, Possibili, et a Falso*. The purpose of this treatise, to which Locke, it will be remembered, refers in his famous attack on 'innate ideas' in the first book of his *Essay of Human Nature*, is to show that *κοινὰ ἔννοιαι*, *notitiae communes*, or common notions, are necessary to knowledge. Among *notitiae communes* Herbert reckons Religion, on the ground that there has never been a nation or age without religion. To ascertain what religious doctrines can rank as *notitiae communes*, the same appeal to universal consent is entered. 'We must see what things in Religion are acknowledged by universal consent ; these must all be brought together ; and what things soever all men take for true in religion are then to be reckoned among *notitiae communes*.' These universally held principles are eventually enumerated in five articles :

1. That a supreme being or God exists.
2. That he ought to be worshipped.

3. That the principal part of his worship is moral virtue or the right use of our faculties.

4. That faults or crimes are to be expiated by repentance.

5. That rewards and punishments are to be expected from God's goodness and justice, both in the present and also in a future life.

We are here a long way from Pomponazzi. The existence of the soul after death is implied to be a fundamental part of religion. There is no mention of the stars, divination by means of which More had already made his Utopians utterly reject.<sup>1</sup> We have already seen how Herbert deals with star-worship in his book *de Religione Gentilium*. Though Herbert's theory is one of the sufficiency of Natural Religion, it is not a Naturalism. Herbert is, as we saw,<sup>2</sup> not even a determinist. Free will is a reality both in man and in God; and, as a consequence of this, the existence not only of a general but of a particular providence is expressly defended. Grace is distinguished from nature, and corresponds to the distinction of God's particular from his general providence. Although no revelation is necessary to enable us to know God and serve him acceptably, yet on certain conditions one may accept a revelation. What are these conditions? The first is that before consulting it one must do everything possible by way of prayer or the like to 'provoke providence as well particular as universal'; the second that the revelation be made to oneself; the third that it must persuade us to some course good in itself; the fourth that he who embraces the revelation must be conscious in a special manner of the divine influence. This amounts to saying that no external authority must ever be permitted to override the dictates of an independent conscience or supersede the duties of natural religion, and that no acceptance of a truth as revealed can have religious

<sup>1</sup> 'As for the amities and dissensions of the planets and all that deceitful divination by the stars, they never as much as dreamed thereof,' *Utopia* ii. 6. I quote from Robinson's English version.

<sup>2</sup> Above, p. 347.

value apart from a real perception by the individual of its appropriateness to his own case, or from a personal sense of its divine origin. All merely traditional religion is thus set aside ; but for one bred a Christian to disown his debt to the teaching of such a religion as Christianity, which seemed to Herbert to tend throughout to the support of the five articles of Natural Religion, he regarded as ungrateful. But there was nothing in Herbert's principles inconsistent with a *personal* revelation received (to quote his own words) 'asleep or awake, in ecstasy, in conversation, in reading or otherwise', and, as we saw, he relates that he himself had received such a one at the conclusion of his book *de Veritate*. The story is this. After the book was written, it was shown to two distinguished scholars, one of them the illustrious Hugo Grotius and the other his friend the Arminian divine Tilenus. They exhorted Herbert to print and publish it. 'Yet, as I knew it would meet with much opposition, I did consider whether it was not better for me awhile to suppress it. Being thus doubtful in my chamber, one fair day in the summer, my casement being open towards the south, the sun shining and no wind stirring, I took my book, *de Veritate*, in my hand, and kneeling on my knees, devoutly said these words: "O thou Eternal God, Author of the light which now shines upon me, and giver of all inward illuminations, I do beseech Thee of Thy infinite goodness to pardon a greater request than a sinner ought to make ; I am not satisfied enough whether I shall publish this book *de Veritate* ; if it be for Thy glory, I beseech Thee give me some sign from heaven ; if not, I shall suppress it." I had no sooner spoken these words than a loud though gentle noise came from the heavens, for it was like nothing on earth, which did so comfort and cheer me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign I demanded ; whereupon also I resolved to print my book. This, how strange soever it may seem,

I protest before the eternal God is true, neither am I anyway superstitiously deceived therein, since I did not only clearly hear the noise, but in the serenest sky that ever I saw being without all cloud did to my thinking see the place from whence it came.'

It remains to comment briefly on some features of the new trend given to Natural Theology by Herbert, and the results of which were to be seen in the many writers on the subject of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I have already referred<sup>1</sup> to the ancient treatise of the ninth-century Arabian thinker, Ibn Tufail, which when translated into Latin in 1671 by Pococke the younger under the title of *Philosophus Autodidactus*, drew much attention in the congenial atmosphere of the seventeenth century. It was not only to Deists, or to persons inclined to Deism, that it appealed but to Quakers,<sup>2</sup> who, believers in a historical revelation as they were, yet agreed with Herbert in laying a stress unusual among the orthodox of their day on the necessity of illumination by the 'inner light' for a saving reception of that revelation. The author of the *Philosophus Autodidactus*, in attempting to portray the religion attainable by an individual isolated from all traditions and revelations, makes his hero capable of rising even in his solitude to a high degree of mystical contemplation, yet, when at the age of fifty he first enters into the society of other human beings, ready and willing to accept the Mohammedan revelation. Herbert, though perhaps his respect for Christianity and Ibn Tufail's for Mohammedanism may fairly be compared, certainly holds that Natural Religion needs not to be crowned by any revelation. That is the first distinguishing mark of the new Natural Theology. Natural Religion can

<sup>1</sup> Above, pp. 288 f.

<sup>2</sup> See preface of Simon Ockley to his English translation (1708), where he says he has heard that there is a Quaker translation already.

(it is held) stand, and permanently stand, alone. We may next inquire how far Herbert's theory of Natural Religion is bound up with his epistemological doctrine of *notitiae communes* or (to use the more familiar phrase of Locke) 'innate ideas'. Perhaps we may say on this point that, if one could really dispense with innate ideas elsewhere and yet attain to science, it might be possible here also. But if one holds that no knowledge can have a purely empirical origin, such as Locke would assign to all knowledge, he will admit, under whatsoever name, 'innate ideas' in Natural Religion as well as elsewhere. It is a remark often made that Locke allowed himself to be to some extent, in the first book of the *Essay*, diverted from the real problem by the refutation of a form of the theory of innate ideas so crude that it is difficult to suppose that any serious thinker ever held it. The only thinker whose name he actually mentions in his discussion and whose statements he subjects to express examination is Lord Herbert. It is not indeed fair to Lord Herbert to charge him with asserting the actual knowledge (as distinct from the use) by infants and savages of general axioms, principles, or laws of thought. Yet it is possible to find his language sometimes incautious; and, in particular, with respect to Natural Religion, most of us would nowadays be disposed to charge him with seeking at the very outset of man's religious development what has really been reached only as the result of a long evolution. We might admit that he was right in holding, as against an empiricism like Locke's, that religion cannot (any more than reason in general) be, strictly speaking, developed out of something in which the 'promise and potency' of it was not already in a genuine sense present. And yet we might doubt whether it was from the first present as anything which we could describe as the knowledge of a Supreme Being. We must not indeed overlook the fact that even so accomplished an anthropologist as the late Mr. Andrew



Lang<sup>1</sup> thought the evidence irresistible for the existence among very primitive peoples, side by side with extremely barbarous religious notions and practices, of traces pointing to an older though now decayed faith in 'high gods' much like the supreme divinities of much more advanced peoples. Quite recently so careful and learned a scholar as Mr. Warde Fowler<sup>2</sup> has used language which suggested that he is on this point very much of Mr. Lang's opinion. This is not the place to discuss the evidence alleged for such a view, nor have I the necessary knowledge profitably to do so. But I would make two observations which seem to be not irrelevant to the subject.

I. We are not committed to a choice between admitting what we may call a primitive theism, in the modern sense of the word, and denying that from the very first there must have been implicit in the sentiment which expressed itself in religious observance a sense of having to do (if I may so put it) with the mysterious heart of things; a sense which it is hard for us to describe by words that do not presuppose a more advanced reflexion, but without which it could not have given birth to religion as we know it in history and in our own experience. Hence we might admit that in the most primitive religion there was a recognition of what we may call a 'Supreme Being', if we mean by that very abstract phrase no more than it actually says, and prescind from those associations of a philosophical theology which it so readily calls up.

The question raised by Lord Herbert's third article, which (though variously formulated by him) asserts Morality to be the principal part of divine worship, may be treated in a somewhat similar way. Religion and Morality have often widely diverged; but they are intimately connected in their origin, have never been merely indifferent to one

<sup>1</sup> In *Making of Religion*, pp. 160 ff. ; cp. *Magic and Religion*, pp. 224 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Roman Ideas of Deity*, pp. 34 ff.

another, and in their most highly developed forms are manifestly incomplete each without the other. But this subject I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

2. There does not appear to me anything paradoxical in supposing that in what in one way was a genuine development, there might be, and very likely was, a certain loss involved; that the sentiments associated with a primitive 'animatism' (to use Mr. Marett's word<sup>2</sup>) might be in some respects freer than later forms of religion, as having less in it of those ritualistic and mythological elements which afterwards create obstacles in the way of an advance to a greater degree of rationality and spirituality; while yet the increase of these elements might be due to what was in itself a step forward. For efforts to define and detail, to carry out a principle to consequences logical and practical, are signs of an activity which proves the principle to be something alive and influential in the souls of those who make these efforts. Often in the later history of religion we find the same kind of thing happening. To wish that men should not attempt to elaborate a ceremonial, to formulate a creed, to give political effect to their religious convictions, is to ask that they should not be in earnest with those convictions. And yet again and again it will be found that while such attempts are being made the original religious impulse has been as it were pushed into the background by preoccupations begotten of these attempts to give expression to it, but not themselves religious at all. Such 'corruptions' will often be the work of priesthoods of one kind or another; but this does not justify the thought that priesthoods could with advantage have been dispensed with. In accordance with the principle that Plato brings out in his *Republic*, that to every genuine factor in the spiritual life of the individual must inevitably correspond

<sup>1</sup> *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 259 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See *Threshold of Religion*, 1st ed., p. 15.

a social institution, we shall not expect to find genuine religion characterizing the individual life without the existence of a religious organization, call it church or priesthood or what we will. We often find Deism and the Natural Theology which it is the distinguishing mark of Deism to emphasize regarded nowadays as the creatures of that popular bugbear 'intellectualism'. But the true defect in it is at bottom the same as characterizes the current anti-intellectualism which denounces it. Deism no doubt tends to neglect history ; to fail in recognizing that only through the activity which results in the presence of what at a later stage is seen to be corruption is that process of discrimination rendered possible which results in the disentanglement of what it represents as the pure and uncorrupted original. But the modern anti-intellectualism, though ready enough to upbraid the objects of its attacks with indifference to history, has in fact a like tendency. The 'conceptual process' is often described by it with impatience as what has, so to say, perverted the soul and made it mistake its own creatures for the reality with which (it is sometimes suggested) it might, but for this error, be dealing directly. Yet certainly it is only by the critical investigation of what, in and through this so-called 'conceptual process', we have set before us that there is any possibility of discriminating reality from appearance. No doubt it is a very old enigma with which we are here concerned. Through knowledge, said the old story, came the fall, which is the first step towards redemption ; and the Church has not shrunk from singing *O felix culpa quae talem et tantum meruit habere Redemptorem*. To some that great hymn is a stone of stumbling ; but they may at least be ready to grant that, even if we cannot bless the fault, since it would have been better had it not happened, at least it was better that man should have been tried than preserved a merely 'fugitive and cloistered virtue'. The

Deists in their dream of a Natural Theology mistook the result of reflexion for the primitive germ of religion ; and hence were too ready lightly to part with what they were over-sure was not an integral part of the organism. It is a good omen that in our own day there is less haste in this matter. We see more of the patience of the husbandman in the Gospel,<sup>1</sup> who lets the tares and wheat grow together lest with the tares the wheat should be pulled up too. The danger nowadays is rather that we should not recognize that after all there is a vast difference between the value of the two plants.

By the days of Herbert of Cherbury, Natural Theology had won its freedom. The *saeculum rationalisticum* was at hand, in which it was to take its revenge upon ' Revealed Theology ', and treat it as a handmaiden rather than as a jealous mistress. But this is not the last stage. Rationalism is not really so much an excess of confidence in reason as a want of confidence in it ; since it does not attempt to understand a great part of human experience. A later philosophy will claim for itself the right to take this also into account ; and having done this, will find its new domain more difficult to cultivate than it at first suspected ; and the end is not yet.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 30.

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